

# LIFE IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE

## Eyewitness Stories & Photos

[transcript]

**ANNA BALTZER:** Hi, my name is Anna and I'm here to tell you about my experiences working with a group called the International Women's Peace Service, which is based in the West bank, and basically we do two things. First of all, we're there to document human rights abuses in the region and second of all, we're there to support nonviolent resistance to the occupation. I'll be telling more about what this occupation looks like in the presentation but before I do so just a little bit about myself. I'm a Jewish American and I originally got into this work when I was living in Turkey. I would take trips through the Middle East during my vacations. I was in Iran, and Syria, and Lebanon, and along my way I was taken in by families, many of them Palestinian refugees.

Through my friendships with these people who I met along the way I began to hear, for the first time, a whole different sort of version of the history and present of Israel and Palestine, utterly different from anything that I had ever learned growing up as a Jewish American.

I was very disturbed, alarmed by what I heard. I didn't believe it, I thought it was all propaganda, but it sort of planted a seed and I began to sort of do some of my own research and eventually decided to go to Palestine to see with my own eyes what was happening. And that's when I took my first trip to Palestine. And that's what I would like to tell you about, about what I found when I got there. I'm not here to give sort of a sweeping analysis of the entire history of the conflict, I'm not here to give every single perspective on the issue, I'm here to give my perspective as a Jewish American who spent five months working in the West Bank.

Now, when I first got to Palestine there were, of course, many surprises along the way but one of the first was just esthetically the way Palestine looked. I guess I had imagined the Middle East to be sort of rolling sand dunes, barren desert land, and when I got to there I realized that Palestine was actually very beautiful. This is a picture showing Palestine in the springtime. You can see how fertile and green the land is. But, beyond showing how beautiful it is, I actually think this photograph captures what I have come to believe is really at the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

A lot of people have sort of a perception of this issue is that it is an age-old issue, that what is at the heart of this issue is an age-old rivalry between Jews and Muslims. Something that has been going on for thousands of years and that will continue for thousands more because at its heart are these sort of deep religious differences.

And one of the first realizations that I came to when I got to Palestine was that, for the most part, this really is not a war about religion, this is a war about land, about water, about

resources and I hope that my reasons for coming to those conclusions will be clear in this presentation.

Now, to get you oriented here is a map of the Middle East. Israel and Palestine are located in the Middle East - that tiny little purple and white sliver there. Here is a larger picture of the map and the beige areas of the map indicate the de facto recognized borders of the state of Israel.

Meanwhile, the pink areas on the right and left are the two landmasses making up the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. They are, on the left the Gaza Strip, and on the right the West Bank. I was living in a village in the West Bank and the photographs and stories from this presentation taken are from the West Bank. So, as I said these places are known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Occupied, what does that word mean, right? Well, the purpose of my presentation is to tell you about this occupation. The first part of my talk is just explaining the structures of the occupation. What it is composed of. I'll be talking about restrictive movement, checkpoints, and roadblocks. I'll be talking about settlements and outposts. I'll be talking about the wall. And I'll be talking about imprisonment. Once we have sort of a general understanding about what the system itself looks like, I'll be talking about how are people reacting, how are people resisting. The next part of my talk then will be about resistance.

I'll be talking about everyday nonviolent resistance, I'll be talking in particular about demonstrations, and I have a section as well about Israeli activism.

So, to get started with restricted movement. In the Palestinian territories there are both Palestinians and Israelis living there, but they use different roads. There are Palestinian roads, there are Israeli roads. Palestinian roads tend to be older, often even unusable, like the one you see in the photograph. Israeli roads tend to be more modern, constructed by the Israeli government for Israeli citizens living in these territories, and they might be kind of like four lane highways, as you see in this photo. Palestinians are not allowed to use the Israeli roads unless they're able to obtain a kind of permit, in which case they might be able to use, say, a certain section of a certain road. But, in all other cases, the roads are segregated.

Palestinians and Israelis use different colored license plates. Palestinian cars have green and white license plates meanwhile Israeli cars have yellow colored plates, so that it's easy to see from afar whether the vehicle is carrying Palestinians or Israelis. It also makes it easier for the soldiers who are manning the area to monitor who is using which roads. So, for example, here you can see an army jeep pulling over all green and white license plated vehicles on the side of the road, meanwhile yellow plated vehicles are allowed to pass by unhindered on the left. This is called a checkpoint.

Checkpoints are major institutions in the occupation, they are essentially barriers manned by soldiers or border police that are used to control Palestinian pedestrian or vehicular movement. The idea behind a checkpoint is more or less what you might experience at a

border crossing, where you go and stand in line, you show your ID, you answer a couple of questions, maybe open up your bag.

One of the main differences with checkpoints in the Palestinian territories, as you can see from this map of the permanent checkpoints installed in the West Bank, those little blue things, is that the majority of these checkpoints are not located around the border of the West Bank, but actually the vast majority of them are located internally, within the Palestinian territories, mainly most of them between Palestinian towns and villages.

What this means for a Palestinian person who is living, let's say, just south of Hebron, in the south of the West Bank, who wants to travel, I don't know, 30 miles north to the city of Bethlehem- so, 30 miles, that should take a person under normal circumstances like 30-40 minutes, maybe an hour tops. Well, it's very likely to take that Palestinian person anywhere from 2 hours, to 4 hours, to 8 hours, to maybe even an entire day to travel just those 30 miles just because of the number of times that he or she would be stopped along the way at these checkpoints. Well, this is obviously very frustrating, you know, people are spending hour after hour, day after day at these checkpoints to get from any one place to another.

But, beyond being just sort of a frustration, these checkpoints are extremely disabling to Palestinians daily life, to all aspects of Palestinians daily life. For example, these checkpoints make it very difficult for a Palestinian person to hold a steady job. It's never clear if it's going to take you 10 min or 3 hours to commute from your little village to the nearest city. Similarly, attending classes on a regular basis is pretty much impossible. Unless you happen to have a university in your little village, higher education is basically out of the question. So, beyond being just sort of an annoyance or burden, these checkpoints are preventing the Palestinians from earning a living and from getting an education. Beyond that, you know, getting to a marriage, a funeral, a graduation, going to visit your family, all aspects of daily life are affected. Imagine if you every time you wanted to go to work, or to school, or to church, or wherever else you were going that you had to go through a series of checkpoints that hold you up for 2, 3 hours. How would that affect your life? Maybe that gives you sort of a glimpse of how disabling these checkpoints have become to Palestinians just sort of on a daily basis.

This is a checkpoint outside of the city of Nablus, it's called Huwwara. We were there doing checkpoint watch, where we basically document what's happening at these checkpoints. On this day, the rule was the following: women were allowed through the checkpoint, older men were allowed through the checkpoint, younger boys were also allowed through the checkpoint, but any men between the ages of 15 and 40 weren't, period. It didn't matter where you were coming from, it didn't matter where you were going, it didn't matter who you were, it didn't matter if it was an emergency, if you were a Palestinian male 15 to 40 years of age you couldn't get home, or to work, or to school, or to the hospital, or wherever you were going.

So gathered here are literally hundreds of Palestinian men gathered at the checkpoint in hopes that the rules would change at some point. At one point, I saw two of them go off to

the side with trash bags frantically trying to fill them up. I asked them, "Why are you suddenly picking up trash?" They told me that the soldiers had actually given them the trash bags and told them that if there able to fill up their trash bags with trash that they would be allowed through checkpoint.

Health violations are another major issue at these checkpoints and in the occupation in general. Here you can see here a Palestinian green and white plated ambulance that's pulling over to the side of the road to allow a yellow plated Israeli vehicle privilege, priority on that road. These ambulances will sometimes wait for hours before reaching the checkpoints themselves, and when they get there they're often times not sort of rushed through quickly, but they are actually held at gunpoint, as you can see in this photograph, and another soldier will go around back to sort of screen through the back of the ambulance.

The reasoning given for holding up ambulances, often times longer than average civilian vehicles, is that apparently in the past the ambulances have been used to transfer weapons or people wanted by the Israeli government. Well, I've done a little research on the subject and discovered, actually, that there is one documented case of a Palestinian ambulance being abused for these purposes. But even if they were being used for these purposes, even if that was the case, remember that this Palestinian ambulance is traveling from a Palestinian village to a Palestinian city. It's not travelling from the West Bank into Israel. And that is where these checkpoints are located, between Palestinian built up areas, such that in what way is holding up this ambulance, and endangering the lives of the people in the back of it, in what way is it contributing to the safety or the security of the Israeli population, let alone the entire Palestinian population?

This is the checkpoint outside the village of Deir Ballut, where I spent some time. This checkpoint is open from 7 in the morning to 7 at night. What that means is that if you have any sort of emergency between 7PM and 7AM, well, you're kind of out of luck. In fact, what happened was that a woman from the village who was 7 months pregnant with twins began to have contractions at 1 o'clock in the morning. Her husband drove her frantically to the checkpoint, which they needed to cross to reach the nearest hospital in the city of Ramallah, an hour away. They got to the checkpoint and the soldiers who sleep above it came down to meet them, and they were very polite. They said, "Look, the rule is very clear, the Palestinians are not allowed through until 7 in the morning. Please come back at 7."

Well, the woman obviously could not wait 6 hours to have her babies, so they argued a bit more. The soldiers, again they were very polite and even apologetic, and they just kept saying the same thing over and over again, they said, "Look, we didn't make the rules, we don't even agree with them, we're just following orders." "We're just following orders." This is something I hear from soldiers almost daily, "We're just following orders," and that is exactly what the soldiers were doing.

At that point the husband decided to call an ambulance to come from Ramallah City, an hour away, to the checkpoint so that all it would take is for his wife to walk 5 foot from her

own vehicle across the checkpoint to the ambulance. The ambulance arrives an hour later and the soldiers come down again shaking their head. They said, “Look, it doesn’t matter if you are crossing by foot or by car, you’re still Palestinian, it’s still the middle of the night, you still can’t cross.”

At that point they’re sort of tearing their hair out and the husband decides to call all of his friends. He, like many Palestinians, had actually worked in Israel, speaks Hebrew, and was able to contact an Israeli friend that had a connection to the army that was high enough such that were able to get this woman permission to cross the checkpoint. The soldiers allowed her through, they wouldn’t allow her husband to go with her. She got to the ambulance and immediately began to give birth to the twins.

The twins were born, both of them alive, basically healthy, except, of course, that they two months premature, and because they were premature they were in desperate need of hospital attention. Because they were an hour away, on a bumpy road in the middle of the night, having waited almost two hours at the checkpoint, they weren’t able to reach the hospital in time and because of this both of this woman’s babies died.

I tell this story not because it’s heartbreaking and not because I’m trying to demonize these soldiers. Look, I believe in the Nuremberg Principals, that people are responsible for their actions even if they are following orders. That said, what I think is the greatest crime of all is not so much the acts of the individual soldiers who might be nicer or meaner, but the system itself, the fact that things are structured this way such that there are even soldiers there to begin with who control whether or not a person can go to the hospital. That to me is the greatest crime.

### **[Roadblocks]**

I said, this is the checkpoint outside the village of Deir Ballut. The village itself is sort of over to the left of the photograph and there is a direct road from the village to the checkpoint, but the villagers are not allowed to use it. That is because there is something called roadblocks on it.

Roadblocks are like what you see here, often concrete cubes placed on Palestinian roads to prevent Palestinian from being able to use vehicles on these roads. So, what these roadblocks mean, for example, for the village to Deir Ballut is that instead of taking a half mile paved road from their village to the checkpoint every morning on their way to work or to school, they have to take a 3 mile unpaved detour all the way around through the countryside to reach the exact same spot. What does this mean for them? More time, more stress, more wear & tear on their vehicles, more money for gas. And again, this question of security, right? These institutions, these checkpoints, these roadblocks are supposed to be there for the security and safety of Israeli population, to prevent terrorism.

In what way are these roadblocks securing anybody? You know, forcing Palestinians to take this long detour, how much of this is about security and how much of this is about control? Some roadblocks are made with dirt and you can see these villagers on the right

here coming home from work. They live on the other side of the roadblock, so what they have to do every morning is that they drive their cars to the roadblocks, park them, walk around by foot, and take a taxi the rest of the way to work or to school, and repeat the process coming home. So, these roadblocks prevent something as basic as Palestinians taking their vehicles from their house, to their work, to their school.

Finally, these roadblocks are extremely disabling to the Palestinian economy. As you can imagine transporting goods from one end of the land to the other is not a trivial process given all of these checkpoints and roadblocks. So, basically, a truck carrying Palestinian goods, when it reaches a roadblock, basically has to sort of turn around and back up against the roadblocks, get another vehicle to come from the other end to turn around and back up from that end, and someone has to actually manually transmit these goods from one end of the roadblock to the other, as you see from these photographs. Well, the products are not always office equipment, they could be produce, perishables, things that can go bad by the time they reach their destination, they could be desperately needed medical supplies. Beyond just taking a long time, this whole process renders a lot of these Palestinian products much more expensive than they otherwise would be because of the extra man power and vehicle power that is required to transport them. What happens then is that a lot of these Palestinian products end up being even more expensive than their Israeli counterparts, which are very easy to transport on Israeli only roads. What happens then, of course, is that the Palestinian market is then flooded with Israeli products, which Palestinians, many of them struggling to make ends meet, end up purchasing them, and instead of supporting their own economy, supporting the same country that is occupying them.

### **[Settlements]**

Settlements are the next part of my talk. Settlements in the territories are essentially communities of Jewish civilians living on Palestinian land. They may be sort of villages, towns, cities.

Here is a rather large one near Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Again, all of this land here is Palestinian, land that belongs to the Palestinians and is internationally recognized as Palestinian land. Yet, there is this city that has been built on top of it that is exclusively for Jewish Israelis. Well, what does this mean, you know, who gets to live in that city? Well, I could live in that city, right, because I'm Jewish. I would just have to fill out an application; I could move there next week if I wanted to. Yet, the farmers, the Palestinians that own that land that that city was built on are not allowed to live in it.

Now this process is nothing new, it's happened throughout history all over the world and there's a name for it, it's called colonization. It's interesting that in English and in Hebrew that we have this kind of benign word, you know, "settlements." While in many other languages, like French for example, these settlements are called "colonies," and that's exactly what they are. They are illegal according to international law, which prohibits an occupying power from transferring citizens from its own territory to the occupied territory, which is exactly what Israel is doing.

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Instead of working against the system though, Israel actually promotes it. As you can see in this photograph, which shows a billboard on an Israeli only road on the Palestinian territories, and it basically says, and it's in Hebrew, it says "Now more than ever," and underneath it says basically if you come to our community, to Ariel, which is a settlement, if you come to live in Ariel you will be rewarded with 100,000 Israeli shekels. That's more than \$20,000 U.S. dollars. In other words, the Israeli government is actually paying its own citizens to move from Israel proper to the Occupied Territories to become part of the illegal occupying population.

What is particularly interesting to me about this billboard is, who is it targeting? You know, who are going to be the Israelis who uproot their families to move on this foreign land because it's cheaper to do so? Is it going to be well off, wealthy established Israeli families? No, they want to live in Tel Aviv. The families who end up of taking advantage of these offers are going to be low income Israelis, poor Israelis, recently immigrants Africa, from Eastern Europe.

In fact, a lot of these settlements, Ariel included, are populated primarily by immigrants who move to these territories not because they say, "This land is ours and nobody else's," but because they're looking for a higher standard of living. These financial offers can be very appealing. People that take advantage of them will get nice housing, often times with mortgages subsidized by the government, there are parks for their kids to play, in strip malls, swimming pools in a place where water is so precious. It's a nice offer, right?

Again, this is all being built illegally on Palestinian land. At this point there are settlements all over the West Bank. The red dots on this map indicate where you have an illegal Jewish only colony on built on Palestinian land. Of course, coming along with the settlements and colonies is the road network. Here you can see it's just a handful of them, but you can see the way the blue roads and highways that really chop up and compartmentalize the Palestinian landscape.

Remember these roads are built illegally on Palestinian land, the Palestinians owning the lands, for the most part, aren't even allowed to use them because of the segregated road system.

### **[Outposts]**

The next part of my talk is about Outposts, which are similar to settlements in that they are incidents of Jewish Israeli living illegally on Palestinian land.

One of the main differences are the people who choose to live in these outposts. So, I talked before about what I called "economic settlers" moving to the territories for financial benefits, and they represent about 80% of the settler population, a vast majority that says, according to polls, that they would be willing to leave if they were offered financial compensation. So, when Israel says it's impossible to make these hundreds of thousands of settlers leave, remember that the vast majority are there

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simply because the government is paying them to do so. The remaining 20% of the settler population are often called “ideological settlers,” moving to the territories not for money but because of their beliefs. Many of them believe that the land in the West Bank and Gaza belongs to the Jewish people for oftentimes religious reasons or maybe political reasons.

According to many these people the Palestinians are the ones who are occupying this land, “Jewish land.” So, they will actually come in the middle of the night with trailers and simply establish themselves on a plot of Palestinian land and say, “We’re not leaving, this land belongs to us.”

Well, a farmer wakes up the next morning and there’s an outpost on his land. While the Israeli government says that it doesn’t condone this type of practice, it doesn’t do a whole lot to prevent the settlers from coming, or to make them leave. So, over time these outposts begin to grow.

More settlers move into them, eventually they want a school for their children, they want a fence around them for security, they want a road to connect them to Israel, and over time what you have is it’s no longer an outpost, it’s a new settlement.

That’s the way lot of these settlements were originally founded and grew into what they are today. Once they become settlements and recognized by the Israeli government and such, they become subsidized by the Israeli government, which means subsidized by the U.S. government, by us.

The U.S. government gives Israel between 3 to 5 billion American tax dollars every year. That’s more than 10 million dollars every single day that is going towards upholding these illegal practices.

You know, this may seem like something kind of on the other side of the world, it has nothing to do with us as Americans, but we are the ones paying for this. You know, we have a right, we have a responsibility to know where our tax dollars are going and to ensure that they are not being used to violate human rights, international law, and even U.S. law.

Here’s a few pictures of outposts. This is one is above the village of Yanoun. Oftentimes they’re placed on hilltops for sort of strategic reasons. Here’s the village of Yanoun, a Palestinian village of about 300 people. Here’s one of the homes in the village and again you can see at the top there, one of the outposts on the top of the village. As I mentioned before, a lot of these settlers living in these outposts don’t really think the Palestinians have a right to live where they are.

So they’ll actually come down, with large weapons even, to try and threaten the villagers, to try to make them leave their homes and land. Here’s a pictures of one of these armed settlers that’s come down to threaten a villager picking her olives. In the past these settlers have beaten up villagers, they’ve poked the eye out of a young boys face, they’ve beaten an old woman with her walking stick, they’ve killed a villager, they’ve stolen olives.

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Keep in mind, of course, that the Palestinians in this part of the world are not allowed to have any kind of weapons. Now, clearly some Palestinians do manage to get weapons, we hear about it in the media, but the vast majority of Palestinians don't. They don't have anything to defend themselves with besides stones or their bodies.

Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers and civilians, these settlers, are often times carrying around these large weapons. So that's the kind of balance of power that you feel going into the territories.

The settlers have burned the village generator so that Yaounoun villagers didn't have any more electricity. This is the Yanoun water source where the settlers have come down and they've urinated in the water source, they've poisoned it with dead chickens, anything to try and make the villagers leave.

At the end of 2002, the village of Yanoun came together to make a decision about this issue. What they decided was that they were going to leave. They decided to abandon their ancestral homes and land because they felt so threatened by the settler presence, and one day they picked up and left, all 300 of them.

Well, the international and Israeli peace communities heard about what happened in Yanoun and went to the villagers staying in a nearby town with an offer. What we said was, "If you choose to return to your homes and your land we will commit to maintaining a constant presence of international and Israeli peace activists to live with you in your community for as long as you want us there. We will bear witness to these crimes, we will document them, try to get them into the media, we will stand beside you in solidarity should those settlers attack."

About a third of the villagers accepted our offer and have come back to their homes, almost 100 of them, and living along with them now are these international and Israeli peace activists. This is a picture of one of those activists, his name is David, he is a friend of mine. David was actually the victim of a particularly brutal settler attack in which he was beaten to a pulp in his face, which shows that settlers will attack not only Palestinians but internationals and Israelis who are there in solidarity with those farmers.

### **[Israeli Activists]**

David continues to do wonderful work in the Palestinian territories and he is recovering. He is a citizen of Israel, a Jewish Israeli, and one of many activists that I've had the privilege to work with in Palestine.

Now, it's very important for people to distinguish the difference between what it is to be Jewish, someone from the Jewish religion or culture like myself; what it means to be Israeli, a citizen of the state of Israel; what it means to be a Zionist, someone who supports the idea of an exclusively Jewish state.

These are three separate categories. There is some overlap, but they are not the same thing, and it's very important to distinguish. There are Jewish people who are not Israeli, like myself. There are Israelis who are not Jewish, 20% of the Israeli population are Palestinians. There are Jews who are not Zionists. There are Zionists who are not Jewish- the increasingly influential Christian Zionist movement in this country.

It's very dangerous when these ideas become inflated because people start associating them as equals such that people are afraid of standing up against what Israel is doing because they are afraid that would make them an anti-Semite or a Nazi or something, and it's absurd, it's crazy. Occupation and oppression have nothing to do with Judaism and to criticize these things is not anti-Semitic, so it's important to keep these things separate in our minds.

Here you can see a Jewish Israeli, a Rabbi from a group called *Rabbis for Human Rights*, planting an olive tree alongside a Palestinian farmer. Here you can see an Israeli activist protesting the policies of her government alongside Palestinian colleagues of the resistance.

In Israel all Jewish men and women are required to serve in the military, but there have been thousands of Israeli citizens who stood up and said, "We refuse to take part in this institution." They are known as the "refusniks."

I have to say that in Israel there is a much higher tolerance for debate and dissent on this issue than you find in the United States. In Israel newspapers you will find much more candid descriptions of the occupation than US mainstream newspapers, where sometimes it's even taboo to use the word "occupation." But in Israel, actually, the majority of the people are opposed to the settlements and opposed to the occupation as it is right now.

So, a lot of times people in the United States feel like they have to support the Israeli government in order to support the Jewish people or the Israeli people. They don't realize that, just like in the United States there are Americans who don't always support what part of their government may do, there are Israeli citizens that don't support the Israeli government.

Actually, a very telling statistic shows that it is five times more as likely for an Israeli soldier to commit suicide than to be killed in a terrorist attack. So when people talk about this occupation as helping the Jewish people they don't realize how many Israelis are actually against it and how important it is for the Jewish people as well as the Palestinian people to end this.

Refusniks often suffer from discrimination within their own communities. I've know refusniks that have been ostracized, even disinherited from their families. Refusniks have gone to jail for what they believe and refusniks are ineligible for a number of jobs in Israeli.

So there's a whole slew of institutions built up to prevent Israelis from speaking out about against what their government is doing, and yet they continue. Here is a Palestinian farmer picking olives with an Israel activist in the Olive harvest.

I'd like to bring us back to the main outline. We've talked about restricted movement, we've talked about settlements & outposts, and down on the bottom there we've talked about Israeli activism. I would like to begin now talking about the Wall before getting into imprisonment and of course, resistance.

### **[The Wall]**

So, the wall. This a picture of the wall that Israel is building, that's me and a friend standing in front of it, and this is what it looks like in urban areas, it's 25 foot of concrete. Often times in the newspapers you'll find it's not called the "wall," instead they call it a "security fence."

A lot of people really believe it is a security means to prevent terrorism. I've talked to people who say, "Well, you know look, it's very said to have a wall and everything but they've been fighting for so long and all they want is peace. Maybe just stick up a wall between the two sides, they'll stop fighting each other, they'll stop killing each other." Well, this is an interesting question, right, does separation, does segregation bring peace?

Also interesting, a lot of the people that report the wall it turns out if you ask them may not have ever actually seen a map of where the wall is being built, and this is really critical to understanding the intention behind it and what the effects are actually going to be of this wall. So, you know if you're going to build a wall between your house and your neighbor's house, where would you build it? Along the property line, right, or maybe a little bit on your territory.

Well, take a look at where Israel is building this wall. In this map you can see the border around the West Bank and then you can see those red lines indicating where Israel is constructing this wall. As you can see, over 80% of it doesn't even touch the green line, that border of the West bank, but actually snakes in, in effect annexing all of that land on the western side onto the Israeli side.

In particular, take a look at the Jerusalem area where most of the land is being taken. Remember that, of course, Jerusalem is a holy city not only for Jewish people but also for Muslims and for Christians.

20% of the Palestinian population is Christian and they, along with their Muslim counterparts, are being separated from the religious center of their land, as well as the economic center of their land and the geographic center of their land.

The entire eastern third of the West Bank was going to be cut off with the wall and now, instead of building that wall, they've decided to line that eastern third with checkpoints so that Palestinians, for the most part, can't even access that part of the West Bank.

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So, what's happened is that it's been chopped up. The West Bank has been chopped up into little sections. Here is a series of 4 maps that really show over time what has happened and I think that they really tell the story well. The first map represents, with the green, the amount of land that was owned by the Palestinians in 1946, and that is 92% of the land, where as Jews owned only 8% of the land.

Then, in 1947, the UN Resolution 181 offered Jews 54% of the land and Palestinians and 64% of the land. By the end of the 1948 war, when Israel was declared a state, the Jewish Zionist Forces actually had acquired 78% of the land, leaving the Palestinians with 22% of the land in the West Bank and Gaza.

Finally, now in 2006 you can see what that has come to, a series of smaller sort of enclaves and islands.

Here you can see the region I was living in and the way Palestinians territories has been sort of chopped up and compartmentalized by that wall. In particular, the top left of this is the city of Qalqilya, a city of more than 50,000 Palestinians. A city that has been completely surround by this 25 foot concrete wall, such that its outskirts look something like this now. These are the sniper towers, razor wire, and the concrete wall around the Qalqilya city, also known as the Qalqilya ghetto now or an open air prison even.

Very interesting is that, as a person of privilege in this part of the world, as an American, as a Jewish person, as a white person, I was actually able to see this wall from both sides of it. So here are the photographs of the Qalqilya wall from the city of Qalqilya, from the Palestinian side.

This next picture that I am going to show you is a picture of this exact same wall from the Israeli highway that passes by on the other side of it. I think this is very interesting; they've sort of built up on a slant up to the wall, where they plant flowers in the spring time, such that it doesn't even look like a wall.

As I said before, many Israelis are much better informed about this situation than American Jews or Americans in general in this country. Yet, at some point I actually think that most Israelis probably don't even know what the wall looks like, where it is being built, what it is doing to Palestinians farmers and families. This, to me, is almost a kind of censorship, preventing that message from getting across. Of course, censorship is something happening in our country as well.

Here is a little anecdote, a friend of mine was flying back from Palestine to the US, she had a layover in Germany along the way and she picked up this issue of *International Newsweek* because it had a particularly sympathetic article about the plight of the Palestinians, as you can see at the top there. Then, she had another layover in Chicago on her flight home where she found this, this is also *Newsweek*, August 2004, but the US version, with almost the same information, but one major difference: that article about the plight of the

Palestinians had been completely removed from the entire magazine and replaced by one about the Olympics.

Well, some people will tell that you that's just because some Americans don't care about the Middle East. But, you know, look at the cover story, of course Americans care about the Middle East. We read about what's happening in Iraq, we read about what's happened in Lebanon. This is a kind of censorship and its happening all over the place and we need to be aware of it. It's very dangerous because the very people who are paying for what's happening don't know what's happening.

So, you know, you don't have to take my word for it. I tell people, "Do your own research." I didn't believe it when I first heard it, I did my own research and that's what I recommend for other people to do. Now, another kind of censorship is also just in the wording.

So, for example, instead of calling it a "wall" calling it a "fence." Well, to be fair in rural parts of Palestine the wall looks like this- at its base it is wire fence. But, if you look a little bit closer you'd find that this fence is not the kind of fence that you would have like in your backyard kind of fence. Much of it is reinforced with heavy-duty electric wire and almost everywhere with razor wire.

Back to the concrete area, this is Abu Dis, a neighborhood of East Jerusalem. What I want to illustrate here is that when you have a Palestinian built up area and an Israeli settlement in the Palestinian territories, the wall won't be built, first of all, along the actual border or even right between the Palestinian town or village and the nearest settlement, or even right up against the settlement to just get it onto the Israeli side. But, oftentimes in my experience, they'll build the wall as close as possible to the Palestinian built area so that not only the settlement but all the land between the settlement and the nearest Palestinian town or village also ends up on the Israeli side.

This land, you know, it's not just pretty land to have a picnic on once and a while, this land is land that farmers and families in surrounding areas have been living off of for generations or even hundreds of years. This is their livelihoods that is being taken away from them.

One of the things I do at IWPS is actually accompanying farmers to their land that has now been stranded on the other side of the wall or checkpoints. Israel says that, although it is cutting farmers off from their land, it will allow them through at certain times with a certain kind of permit.

Well, this is a man that I accompanied to the gate of the wall in hopes of getting to his land. He had gone to acquire one of these permits to get to his own land, he had actual papers, as well, dating back to the Ottoman era proving that he is the owner of that land on the other side, but he could see through but he couldn't get to what he wanted to. Well, we went together and we waited for two days trying to flag down any jeep that would pass by, hoping that soldiers would let us pass. They wouldn't. This man, he didn't even want to go

to pick his olives, he just wanted to go to just be on his land. He said, "I want to I just want to sit under my trees," and he couldn't.

So, another thing that people are cut off from is each other. So sometimes if you have a house on the outskirts of a village, because they build the wall right up to the village, that house will end up on the wrong side of the wall. That is exactly what happened to Munira who lives in the house.

In front of it you can see that 25 foot concrete wall separating Munira and her husband and their 6 children from their village, from their community. Behind the house is another wall, separating the family from the nearest settlement. On the right and left sides of the house are two more fences, separating the family from their own land, land that has been annexed by Israel. So, Munira and her family are basically living in a kind of cage. Here's the gate to the cage, you can see it's manned by soldiers. So people who want to visit Munira, whom you can see in the back with one of her kids, have to sort of hope the soldiers are in a good mood and will let them through.

Munira, at this point, hardly dares to leave her cage because she and her husband have been served something called demolition papers, which means that the Israeli army actually intends to demolish their home. Many people actually consider Munira sort of lucky, because, often times, if a house is in the way of an expanded settlement or a road or the wall, they won't bother building a whole fence around and getting a soldier to man it, but they'll actually just bulldoze that house.

So Munira is actually afraid to leave her house for fear that she could come back and it would be gone, not that they wouldn't bulldoze the house with people there, which they have also done in the past.

Here is a picture of Munira, on the left; her husband Hani, on the right; and one of their six children. Well, Hani and his family actually originally came to the village Mas'ha, the village where he lives with Munira, in 1948 as refugees of the 1948 war.

The majority of the people living in the land the UN designated for a Jewish state in 1947, the majority of the people living there they were not Jewish. The Zionist forces actually expelled 750,000 Palestinians from their homes to surrounding areas in the West Bank, and Gaza, and the Diaspora.

Hani and his family, for example, were homeless for 10 years before they were able to finally save up enough money to buy themselves some land and build themselves a home. Hani says that he built this home with his own hands for his family.

So to give this some perspective, what this demolition order, what this wall, what this occupation, what these things are doing is threatening to make Hani, and families like his, refugees for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in recent history.

Keep in mind that 60% of the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza are already refugees, having lost almost everything already. So keep that in mind when you hear people say things, “Like Palestinians just aren’t willing to compromise.” I don’t know about you, but looking at this family and all the Palestinians I worked with during my time in Palestine, what I just kept thinking was just, “How can people live like this? How long can people endure this kind of a system before rising up, standing up for their rights, resisting?”

Well, of course, the answer is that Palestinians are, and have been resisting for a very long time. We only hear about one kind of resistance, violent resistance- suicide bombers that kill innocent Israelis.

People are always asking me, you know, “Anna, why are Palestinians always resisting with bombs? Why are they always strapping bombs to themselves, trying to kill as many Israelis as possible? Why don’t they use nonviolent resistance, like Martin Luther King talked about, like Ghandi talked about? Where are those things happening?” Well, the answer is that Palestinians are, and have been, using nonviolent resistance not just once in a while, not just here and there, but literally almost nearly every single second of every single day their lives. Just think about it for a moment, think about Munira and her family simply staying in their home, simply saying, “Look, you’ve taken our land, you’ve taken our freedom, but you will not take our home,” is a kind of resistance, and it is nonviolent. This is nonviolent resistance.

Think about the villagers of Yanoun who’ve come back to their homes and their land. They know that they could be beaten up, they know they could even be killed by the settlers, but they also know that it is their right to be in their homes, on their land, and they’re coming back to defend their right. This is nonviolent resistance.

In my opinion, any attempt on the part of Palestinians to maintain any kind of normalcy or dignity in their daily lives in spite of this occupation is a kind of resistance to that system; it’s just not something you ever hear about in the newspapers and media.

Here’s a couple other examples of everyday nonviolent resistance in Palestine. Here is group of women from the Tulkarem region who have been cut off from their trees by the wall. They’ve lost their livelihoods, so they’ve formed an embroidery cooperative to sell embroidery, to support themselves and their families. Instead of giving up, instead of leaving, this is nonviolent resistance.

This is the village of At-Tawani, where settlers have actually boiled barley seeds in rat poison and spread that poison around the landscape of At-Tawani to try and dissuade shepherds from bringing their sheep to their land, in fear that the sheep will eat the poison and be killed.

Well, I talked with the shepherd and she knew about the poison, but she also knew that if she doesn’t come back to her land then the settlers would have gotten exactly what they wanted and over time they would have come and confiscated the land saying, “Well,

nobody else was using it.” So she’s coming back to defend her right to be on her land, even if she might lose a sheep or two. This is nonviolent resistance.

Painting the wall, nonviolent resistance. Climbing the wall is nonviolent resistance. Here is a young boy who is building his own roadblock out of rocks and wire that he found in his village. He told me, “Anna, I’m going to build a roadblock so that the jeeps can’t rape my village tonight.” This is nonviolent resistance.

Finally, demonstrations are a kind of resistance happening almost daily in Palestine, we just don’t hear very much about them, where communities of Palestinians will march down to the land that is being threatened. Here you can see a farmer trying to explain to soldiers that have been placed there to basically protect the bulldozers that are uprooting the trees being uprooted, he’s trying to explain to them that the trees being uprooted belong to him and his family and have for generations.

This is something else you might see at a demonstration, Palestinians who’ve come together to pray on their land. I find it particularly moving, given that for many of these Palestinians this could be their last chance to ever be on their land, and they’re choosing to spend these final moments together, as a community, in silence, in worship on their land.

Now, although most of these demonstrations are primarily peaceful they are often met with a great deal of violence from the soldiers, who throw tear gas or sound bombs. There are sometimes rubber bullets or even live ammunition used against nonviolent demonstrators.

There is also sometimes violence from the Palestinians side. Here you can see a picture of a Palestinian boy who has picked up a stone and is throwing it at Israeli soldiers and jeeps at a demonstration. I include it not because stone throwing has anything to do with my work with IWSP, it doesn’t, but first of all because stone throwing is a reality, there are stones thrown at these demonstrations, and second of all to give it a little bit perspective. So the stone throwing that you see here is used as a sort of justification for the mass imprisonment of young Palestinian men who are put in jail for throwing these stones. While I would agree that a stone is definitely a weapon, right, you could definitely kill a person with a stone, no question about it. But we don’t get a much sort of context in which these stones are actually thrown.

So, for example, this boy he hasn’t sort of gathered together a bunch of stones and snuck across the border to Israel to sort of stone as many Israelis as possible because he hates Jews. This boy is in his village and he’s watching jeeps and bulldozers surround his village, uproot his trees, and build a wall around his community. And he’s picking up a stone and throwing it at those jeeps, at those bulldozers. I guess I would just ask you, you know, if someone were to come into your home and start carrying out your television, and then your stereo, and 49 then your computer, at what point would you pick up lamp and throw it at them? Youknow, it’s not about justifying it, it’s about what is realistic. What would you expect of yourself in that situation and how does it compare to what you expect of Palestinians in the situation they are in right now with the wall?



Like I said, many of these kids end up in jail. Here are five kids from the village of Marda, near where I lived, and a jeep was raiding their village one night and they threw stones at the jeep.

No soldiers were hurt, in fact very few soldiers are have actually been hurt by these stones because they are usually thrown from very far away, for fear of being arrested. In fact, these five kids were picked up for stone throwing and put into jail for 6 months. More than 340 Palestinian children and 9,500 adult Palestinian political prisoners are being held in Israeli prisons today. More than 10% of these are what are called “administrative detainees,” which means that they can be held without charge, indefinitely.

I was once walking in Ramallah where I found a silence procession of people holding photographs of their loved ones being held in Israeli prisons. They asked me to show the people of America, so that’s what I am doing. About 40% of the entire adult Palestinian male population in the Occupied Territories has been detained in Israeli detention. Torture, humiliation are systematic according to Amnesty International.

I guess what I find so incredible is that , in spite of the systematic imprisonment of Palestinians involved in violent and nonviolent resistance, in spite of the checkpoints, and the roadblocks, and the settlements, and the outposts, and the wall, and the land confiscation, in spite of all of these things, that Palestinians continue to resist, continue to stand up for their rights.

The finale of my presentation is a slideshow of photographs that I and my colleagues took at demonstrations what I think kind of illustrates what I see as the incredible resilience and strength that remains with the Palestinian people. It is really this resilience and strength that gives me hope for the future and that is why I would like to share it with you now.

[Slideshows]

If you found the presentation moving, if it made you angry, I think that’s good, I think that’s appropriate, but it’s not enough. Palestinians don’t need more people feeling sorry for them. They need people to take action on this issue. Here are some ideas for taking action.

First of all, do your own research, you know, you don’t have to take my word for it, but go beyond mainstream media sources.

Go to Palestine or support somebody who is.

But you don’t have to go to Palestine to be effective on this issue. You can get involved locally, you know, join a divestment campaign based on the divestment move used against South Africa during the apartheid, saying, “As long as you’re committing these violations of international law and human rights so systematically it won’t be us who pays for it.”

You can write a letter to your local media if you find that what is being reported as biased.

Call or write or even visit your representatives, tell them what you think, let them know what you think, let them know that their constituents care about this issue.

And finally talk to your friends and family, ask the people in your community do they know about the wall? Do they know about what's happening in Israel and Palestine?

You have the power to affect the people in your community, so use it to ensure security and peace and justice for all people of the Middle East, no matter who.

[End]