

Palestinian Diary

Report of UCU trip to Palestine

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Together with the UCU International Secretary, I represented the UCU on a delegation to Palestine, in late 2018. This was a solidarity trip organised with other educational trade unions to bring support to our counterparts in the occupied territories - primarily the **General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT)**. During the trip UCU managed to have detailed discussions with our counterpart union, whose general secretary is based in the **Palestine Polytechnic University** in **Hebron** in the **West Bank**.

From our base in occupied East Jerusalem, we visited schools in **East Jerusalem**, in **Nablus**, and **Ramallah**, and met and had discussions with both the **Minister of Education for Palestine**, and the **GUPT**. The latter invited us to attend a delegate meeting in **Tulkarm** where we observed their scheduled elections. This was in a meeting of over 750 delegates - a majority of whom were women.

We also visited refugee camps in **Nablus** [1], and **Bethlehem** [2]. During the visit to Bethlehem we paid a visit to the **Lajee cultural centre** [3], based at the



Aida Refugee camp in **Bethlehem**, and had detailed discussions during the trip with the **Women's Coalition for Peace** [4], **OCHA** (the UN Office for the co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs [5]), the **Defence for Children International** NGO [6], and were given a guided tour and detailed discussion in **Jaffa**, by community activists involved in a joint Palestinian/Israeli list [7] in the current municipal elections.

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1: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/askar-camp>

2: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/aida-camp>

3: <http://www.lajee.org>

4: <http://www.coalitionofwomen.org/?lang=en>

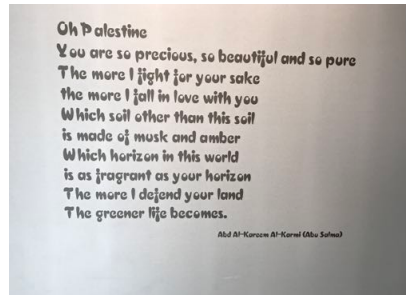
5: <https://www.ochaopt.org>

6: <https://defenceforchildren.org/dci-palestine/>

7: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/21/israel-elections-joint-list-arabs-jaffa>

“We are trying to present a positive outlook to Palestinians. As educators we want to be a ‘ministry of hope’ applying ethics to how one ought to live and work. However this is not particularly easy when students wake every morning and see more checkpoints and the wall snaking through Palestinian communities”.

Sabri Sedum, Minister of Education See P 29



Left to right clockwise: Palestinian Poem from Yasser Arafat Museum; Pupils in Primary school in Ramallah; Garden of Olives, Jerusalem; Local Boy Scout school bank in East Jerusalem

We visited the **Yassar Arafat Museum** [8] during a visit to **Ramallah**, and were also fortunate to be given a guided tour and discussion in the **Al Asqa Mosque** [9] (Jerusalem).

Whilst we were in **Hebron** we visited the **Al Ibrahimi Mosque** [10]. This mosque had been the site of a massacre of Muslim worshippers by a settler in 1994. Following this event the Israeli authorities had occupied, then physically divided the mosque. This had happened at the same time as a core of Israeli settlers had occupied part of the centre of old Hebron. These 400 Israeli settlers, were now guarded by 2000 Israeli soldiers, and the settlement and the actions of its inhabitants continued to be a point of tension in the area (see section below).

While in **Jerusalem**, we were taken to a contested site - **Sheikh Jarrah** [11], not far from our hotel, where settlers are currently trying to encroach into a small historical Palestinian settlement. This had involved amongst other activities, taking

8: <http://www.yam.ps/en/>

9: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/07/al-asqa-170719122538219.html>

10: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/remembering-ibrahimi-mosque-massacre-160225061709582.html>

11: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/facing-eviction-in-sheikh-jarrah>

12: <https://www.youtube.com/user/tamimi1966>

over part of a home owned by a 93 year-old Palestinian woman and continuing to occupy the front of her house, (which had had Israeli symbols painted onto the building). Directly across the road from this particular home, another settler family had blown the doors off a vacated Palestinian house, the occupants having left in fear, and had then likewise occupied that building.

Later we were able to contrast the conditions in the enforced run down occupied Palestinian areas with the **ultra-modern settlements** on the other side of the Israeli constructed partition wall. The particular settlements we saw contained facilities many urban dwellers could only dream of, connected by ultra-modern trams in some cases, and in other cases by modern roads, which Palestinians are not allowed to use.

We also visited the village of **Nabi Saleh** [12] which between 2009 and 2017 held weekly demonstrations against the occupation, and which had been the site of recent publicity.

The publicity which had captured the attention of a section of the world’s media had arisen after a young Palestinian woman **Ahed Tamimi** was arrested and jailed

for slapping a soldier following her cousin being shot in the face by a rubber bullet [13]. She had been jailed under 'anti-terrorism' legislation.

We attempted to visit the site of **Khan al-Ahmar** [14] which had been in the news in the week of our visit, due to a temporary halt to an Army operation to clear a Bedouin camp. The army had been attempting to clear the camp in order to create a further settlement, which were it to be established would split the West Bank in two. We were prevented from doing so by a police road block, although (with police aid) a group of settlers could be seen congregating above the camp to continue the pressure on the Palestinian Bedouin community.

During our trip we were also given the opportunity to explore **old Jerusalem**, **Nablus** and **Hebron**, which allowed us to observe some aspects of the oppressive nature of the occupation and some of the day to day issues forced on the people of Palestine by the occupation. It was clear

however, that we were only scratching the



Khan Al-Ahmar - Bedouin Camp under threat of eviction

surface in a visit of a week's duration. Finally, we visited the **Holy Sites** in Jerusalem, including the Wailing Wall, but like other visitors to Palestine we could not visit **Gaza**, entrance to which is forbidden. In regard to the situation in Gaza however, we did discuss with the GUPT, the minister for Education, and with our University colleagues, the manner in which contact can be maintained and also union activity be progressed with teaching colleagues there, who are suffering in an environment that is both stifling in terms of internal politics, and also through the deprivations forced by the blockade of the Israeli government.

As a union we were very grateful for the opportunity to join other educational trade unionists in making this visit.

13: <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2018/03/ahed-tamimi-story-multiple-narratives-180303101517310.html>
 14: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khan_al-Ahmar



“It’s like two different worlds in the same city. The Israelis are building hundreds of ultra-modern homes and flats in settlements on the illegal land in and around Jerusalem – i.e. the bits that they invaded in 1967 that aren’t recognised by the UN as part of Israel”.

Palestinian community worker commenting on journey from Tel Aviv airport to Jerusalem

Left clockwise: The Israeli imposed partition of the Al Ibrahim Mosque; Palestine home seized and settled in Sheikh Jarrah; Gas canisters fired against demonstrators in Nabi Saleh; New settlement on outskirts of Jerusalem.

Some of the more detailed itinerary of our visit is given below.

Saturday Oct 20th

Ben Gurion Airport

The border guard was insistent to know whether we knew or were meeting anyone in Israel, but the only person in our group to actually get hauled aside for a second, more detailed discussion was a young female Moslem colleague from London. Unfortunately she was also hauled aside on the return trip, after being stopped 5 times between getting off the taxi at Ben Gurion airport and the plane. She was taken away, forced to strip by two female security officers, and also had her bag searched before being allowed to proceed. My own bag was also searched on the way out, as were those of a sizeable number of us.

Some of our Palestinian colleagues had given us their views during our trip to our hotel:

It's like two different worlds in the same city. The Israelis are building hundreds of ultra-modern homes and flats in settlements on the illegal land in and around Jerusalem – i.e. the bits that they invaded in 1967 that aren't recognised by the UN as part of Israel.

Palestinian villages in the occupied territories are not allowed to modernise, so outwards impressions were that compared to much of the modern homes for Israeli citizens, they looked in some places like collections of hovels.



Palestinians own the land in this village but are not allowed to build or modernise

In some places in Jerusalem they had the appearance of travellers' camps (and as we were to see later, their inhabitants face the constant problems of the Israeli authorities trying to get them expelled).

Walk around old city, and through the Damascus Gate

We entered the old city through the Damascus Gate, past two Israeli police and army posts.

Walking around here, it really felt to me as if I was living through history. There were markets along many of the streets we walked with the market within the old walls reminding me partly of the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul although this market was in the open. One difference of course was the Israeli army checkpoints as you went in, and armed Israeli troops intermittently in the streets and passageways themselves.



Damascus Gate with army checkpoint at entrance

Sunday 21st

On Sunday, we saw more of the structural way in which land is being captured in favour of the occupation. Huge motorways are being built on and through occupied land with urban expansion taking place around this. We also saw many examples of winding roads being built to Israeli settlements - which are often placed on the crown of hills. Palestinians are then routinely denied access to these roads. We saw many examples of access to Palestinian villages having been cut off apart from one controlled smaller road, that involved a

huge detour from the nearest built up Palestinian area. As mentioned earlier, trams go straight between some settlements, passing through but not stopping in Palestinian areas.



Modern transport - through Palestinian land, but not for Palestinians

Cars have different coloured number plates depending on jurisdictions. For instance yellow plates signified a resident of Jerusalem, white was Palestinian, green was Bethlehem. In practice, given that the land is increasingly zoned in an apartheid-like fashion, this helps the police stop cars, plus determines where people are allowed to drive.

Likewise there is a complicated set of National Identity Cards, which split people into '48' Israel (Israeli citizenship), whilst individuals living in the post 67 occupation territories carry Jerusalem IDs (in Jerusalem) and Jordanian citizenship. In the West Bank (Palestinian Authority) zones they carry Palestinian ID.

Road blocks, particularly 'fly-ones' as they were called, can cause major inconvenience. Travelling from Hebron to Ramallah (43km/ 27 miles) can take a whole day if there is a crackdown by the military authorities (which is quite frequent).

Breaking the Oslo accords ^[15], there were over 40 settlements in in one stretch of 50 km that we travelled. Some were huge, with many tens of thousands of people in them - in terms of size, they would actually count as small cities in the UK. The modern settlements we saw or visited tended to be very densely urbanised, with buildings next

to each other. Palestine areas in the occupied territories on the other hand, have plots of land separating houses, but the occupants are denied the rights to build on this empty land.

Many Israeli settlements that I saw were



Conditions in the highly urbanised Israeli settlements showed a world of difference to Palestinian areas

like gated areas often with armed private security companies guarding access. In addition, there was usually army protection visible.

The proximity of the major road



Army presence at the entrance to a settlement

construction to Palestinian villages can bring all sorts of consequential issues. For instance, a Palestinian school had been closed by the Israeli Army the week before we arrived as it was claimed that children were stoning settlers' cars. It took the physical presence of the Palestinian Minister of Education, trade union members, and parents to enforce its re-opening again (this is referred to in more detail in the points made by the minister below).

15: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/what-are-oslo-accords-1749919844>

Visit to a teachers' AGM in Tulkarm near Nablus

We went to local meeting of the General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT), in Tulkarm (within 'Zone A' – the area under control of the Palestinian authorities). This was addressed by their President/ General Secretary and others. As well as dealing with issues of education it is clear that the question of the occupation was never ignored in such meetings – this was evidenced in the backdrop to the hall which was a teacher's banner which included the slogan *Jerusalem is our Palestinian capital*.



Jerusalem is our Palestinian capital - prominent on the banner

The impact of global culture was also evident however - at the start of the AGM a young man in a Real Madrid t-shirt intoned bits out of the Koran, and we then all stood for the Palestinian National Anthem.

The facilities in Tulkarm were, like elsewhere, run down. We were meeting in a big hall which was obviously used for community functions. The immediate environs however were like a building site or site where building repairs had been on going constantly.

The content of much of what was said (which was translated for us) was of interest – there were elections going on within the union, so there may have been some electioneering taking place (I'm sure there was). However, I noted that several union delegates brought up the issue of broader Palestinian politics, arguing that *the unity of the Palestinian people was key to building a future education*.

A female speaker – the manager of the local union association welcomed our presence. In her speech, she said that *the GUPT was part of the PLO and had role in perfecting education but also in resisting the occupation*.



Female delegates were some of the first to speak at the meeting

Whoever won the local posts had the major responsibilities that came with these jobs.

The President of the Union then spoke. He also welcomed us and talked of the long existing international solidarity between the education unions. He talked of democracy in the GUPT and in the wider field as the only way forward. Apparently the GUPT have 7 branches in Gaza as well as branches in Syria and elsewhere that Palestinian teachers were to be found, and we were able to discuss the implications of this in our discussions later.

A member of our delegation then briefly addressed the meeting on behalf of ourselves and brought pledges of solidarity to the meeting.

It was of interest to me that their union elections apparently needed a 50 percent turnout for a quorum. This they (over) achieved with 650 people present - apparently these were the first elections they had been able to have for several years. The President had been in his post for about 3 years and I believe was seen as a modernising influence, with a commitment to an increased involvement of women in the union part of his modernizing pledge.

Nablus



The delegation then travelled to **Nablus**. Like many of the areas we visited, at first sight Nablus seems like a city with stunted development due to the occupation and lack of resources. However, in talking to some Palestinian colleagues, the issue of corruption was also raised as a continual problematic factor in areas under the control of the Palestinian Authorities.



Conditions in some of Nablus indicated the underdeveloped nature of many of the Palestinian areas

Our first visit in Nablus was to a primary school for girls. Their English was very good and they asked us quite a lot of questions about our views of Israeli actions and about how teaching was carried out in the UK. They then performed some songs and greetings. As this school was under Palestinian control, here they could teach using the Palestinian curriculum – something that was not easy to do in the occupied territories as we saw the following day.

In Nablus, we then visited a Refugee camp, the **Askar** camp (with a population of 18,000 people), and within this area, also a



The school pupils (at all the visits) were interested about the situation in schools in the UK, and in our views of Palestine

nearby Arts Centre, the **Dar Al Fonon** centre

Nablus [16] itself is famous for stone quarrying and soap factories.

According to locals we spoke to, the Yitsar Israeli settlement in Nablus was very aggressive – with a history of attacking farmers, stopping the harvesting of olives and other actions including shooting holes in the water storage tanks on the roofs of houses. These water tanks which are seen throughout are needed as water is often turned off 'as a weapon'.

Roads and infrastructure were very poor in Nablus in general and during the trip I saw a donkey walking about on the road, and a donkey cart amongst the vehicles, being used to transport goods. In the part of the city we visited there were two refugee camps (Askar 1 and Askar 2) originally constructed in the 1950s, on both side of the road we travelled along. I had imagined that refugee camps would be mobile areas comprising of tents, but these camps for Palestinians displaced by Israeli forces in 1948, had been there for almost 70 years, and were dense, ramshackle, urban areas.

The Dar al Fonon Arts Centre [17] on the edge of Askar Camp had been founded 11 years ago. This is a centre where they teach dancing, singing, (and break dancing)

16: http://www.nablusguide.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59%3Anablus-today&catid=39%3Ahistory&Itemid=60&lang=en

17: http://www.nablusguide.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109%3Adar-al-fonon-

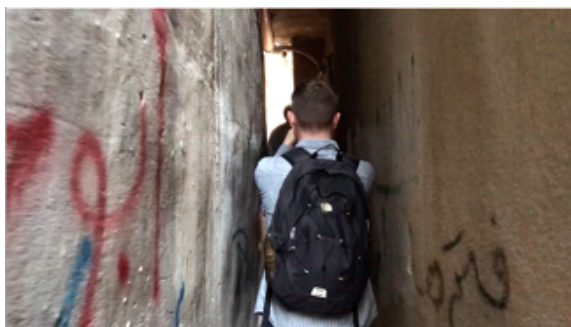
amongst other things. They work with all schools although the staff are not members of the teachers' union.

In the Askar refugee camp, established by the UN first in 1950, the slogan (as elsewhere) is 'Existence is Resistance'. Eighteen thousand people live in cramped buildings, some of which have been there since the late 1950s.



Ask Refugee camp - a built up but ramshackle area with very few facilities

In our visit to the camp itself, the guide took us through what he called the narrowest road in the world – so narrow, it was impassible for a pregnant woman. We took photographs of the conditions and discussed the reality of living there with the local guide.



Some of the streets were so narrow as to be almost impassable

We then finished our visit to Nablus by going to the **old Nablus market**, where we were able to try some of the Palestinian food [18], and if we wished, purchase some spices for taking back from an old milling workshop.

Nabi Saleh

On our trip back to East Jerusalem we visited **Nabi Saleh**, a village which contains 600 Palestinians. They had been carrying out anti-occupation demonstrations every Friday from 2009 until 2017 until growing illness from Army tear gas had forced a break in this. At present they have 10 young people from the village, jailed by the authorities.

In the village we met Bilal Tamimi (who has a very influential you tube and face book page – see footnote 12 above). Two of Bilal's sons had been in jail, although one had just been released two weeks previously. Bilal talked about the constant use of tear gas by Israeli troops that had caused kidney failure and collapse of some of those who had had to endure it. This had led to the demonstrations having to stop. Over the period of the demonstrations, there had been 10 killed and 400 officially hospitalized due to the army's treatment of the demonstrators. The demonstrations had started when Israeli settlers had taken over the local source of water - the local spring. We were able to see the spring from the heights of part of the village. A road had been built for the Israeli settlers down from their situation on the heights, but in front of the spring. Now Palestinian villagers could not cross the road to access the spring – it was fenced off, hence the anger.

Bilal's niece **Ahad Tamimi** was the young woman who had received lots of publicity in the recent period particularly on You Tube as she had slapped a soldier (see introduction above). She had been jailed for a period, for 'terrorism' following this. The Israeli High Court had originally ruled the Israeli settlement at Nabi Saleh illegal in 1976 but the governmental change under

17: [http://www.nablusguide.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109%3Adar-al-fonon-](http://www.nablusguide.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109%3Adar-al-fonon-center&catid=37%3Asociety&Itemid=64&lang=en)

[center&catid=37%3Asociety&Itemid=64&lang=en](http://www.nablusguide.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109%3Adar-al-fonon-center&catid=37%3Asociety&Itemid=64&lang=en)
18: Most of us discovered an old Palestinian dish called Knafeh, a type of sweet cheese

Israeli premier **Menachem Begin** the next year had reversed this. The authorities had started by building out from the British era mandate army base in the area which they then argued was 'state property' - ie not 'occupied' territory.

Bilal reported that the settlers regularly harassed villagers. On one occasion they had proceeded right into the centre of the village after midnight before being seen off. In Bilal's opinion, their aim had been to generally intimidate, attempt to burn the mosque (not for the first time) and spray graffiti. At one of the houses in the village, we saw a collection displayed of hundreds of used Gas grenades and canisters which the female members of one of the families had made into an open-air art exhibition.



Occupation as art - Gas Canisters displayed by a defiant community

Monday

Schooling in occupied **East Jerusalem** – a snapshot of day to day problems

We visited an East Jerusalem Primary School for boys, (where the music was provided from the local Palestinian Boy Scout band – the Scouts apparently being a very popular organisation locally). We also witnessed an open-air school assembly conducted mostly by the school pupils themselves.

At the start of the assembly we listened to the National Anthem, then extracts from the Koran then one of the pupils read some

work he and his schoolmates had prepared – the teachers felt this was a way of encouraging all the students to work together.

The 'Proverb of the Day' was announced - that day's being: 'Life is full of rocks don't let them crush you. Gather them up and climb over them'. The pupil also narrated a local poem about Jerusalem.



Open air assembly with proverb of the day while the school scout band looks on

In discussions with the teachers we discovered that the structure of education in Jerusalem was totally different from elsewhere. As a city under occupation, they had two main bodies overseeing education - which created discrepancies and constant problems.

The main problems had started in 1967 when the Israelis had wanted to impose the **Israeli curriculum** (at that time Education was provided by the Jordanians). Palestinians had therefore started new schools that would allow the Palestinian or Jordanian curriculum to be used. This had continued to be an area of tension, even when a Palestinian curriculum was created following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority after the Oslo accords. Israel authorities currently controlled 45 percent of the education sector in Jerusalem – financially the schools were Israeli but students Palestinian. The Israeli authorities therefore tried to impose the Israeli curriculum when and where they could.

Palestinians had schools run as '**WAQF**' (Charitable endowment)

Schools – which had been first established under Jordanian and now Palestinian authority. Fifteen percent of schools were in this category, such as the one we were visiting - run using the Palestinian curriculum. However, they had been obliged to use the WAFQ nomenclature from the time of the Jordanian mandate in Jerusalem, as they were not allowed to use a Palestinian logo. According to the Israeli authorities they were not allowed to operate as Palestinian entities, so they had to operate using the Jordanian title.

There was also a private sector, a third of which could be religious or charitable. Most of these schools were held between both the authorities, with textbooks from Palestinians but budgets from Israel - so there was constant pressure to conform. There were also 60 UNWRA schools - about 1.5 percent of provision. The sector therefore could be seen to suffer from problems of fragmentation.



Schools in occupied East Jerusalem have to make do with rented accommodation - converting domestic homes into classrooms

It seemed clear to me as an educator, that to understand the challenges facing students it was necessary to know which school or sector they were in and which narrative they worked under.

In some schools the paramount challenges were issues of identity, in others, such as this one, it was resources and facilities. They were not allowed to build - they had to rent school spaces often barely suitable.

They had 350 pupils in this particular school, but had only a small playground to use (and one ramshackle outside toilet for the 350 boys). This building in particular, had



This ramshackle facility was the only toilet for the 350 boys of the school

a ground floor totally sealed as it was deemed 'illegal' to use it as a school - they had created 8 classrooms on that floor but they were fined by the Israeli Authorities and the doors to the classrooms welded shut. They had been in court for 10 years contesting the case. In the vicinity they had rented another building for classrooms so the pupils had to move about between sites during the day.

We then visited a girls' primary school across the road - a school for 280 girls with 15 converted classrooms, all in rented buildings. They had used the old 'refugee law of 47' for their permit of operation. This school had been made up of 4 houses rented from local families, with the desks crammed into what had originally been normal living rooms and other domestic spaces.

Our delegation then had a question and answer session with the staff of the school, the core of which is seen in **Appendix I**

We next visited OCHA (The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)



Our delegation was interested in the reasons for what seemed to be the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, and therefore sought information from **OCHA** – who had opened their Jerusalem office in 2002, following the **Intifada**.

OCHA’s main aim was to bring all the actors working in the humanitarian field together – the 12 organisations who do humanitarian work plus 18 NGOs. OCHA’s aim was to generate a common understanding of the problems and what had to be done together, with an aim of reducing duplication.

Every year they produced a humanitarian response plan - on the situation and the strategy needed. We asked for a briefing on this.

OCHA had a mandate to work in the West Bank including Jerusalem and Gaza. Two million people lived in Gaza and 3 million in the West Bank. They had identified 1.3m people in need of help. An appeal had been made for \$540m dollars to help the Palestinians. About 75 percent of this was for **Gaza**. This year they faced

unprecedented underfunding however. Currently they had about 32 percent of what they had been promised. The main problem now was the US cut in funding for **UNWRA** meaning there was still a huge uncertainty for next year.

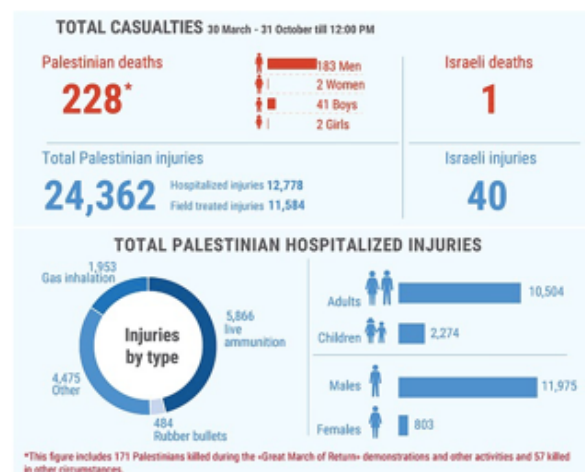


UNWRA had originally been set up in 1949 to deal with Palestinian refugees and were involved in education, health and other services. The UN had 3 offices in West Bank and a sub office in Gaza. Outside Palestine itself, Lebanon Syria and Jordan also had perhaps 5 million Palestinian refugees

The situation in the Gaza Strip

In OCHA’s view the main causes of vulnerability in Gaza were threefold.

Firstly, the Israeli blockade since the 2007 takeover by **Hamas**. This blockade affected the recovery of the economy and any sense of normal life.



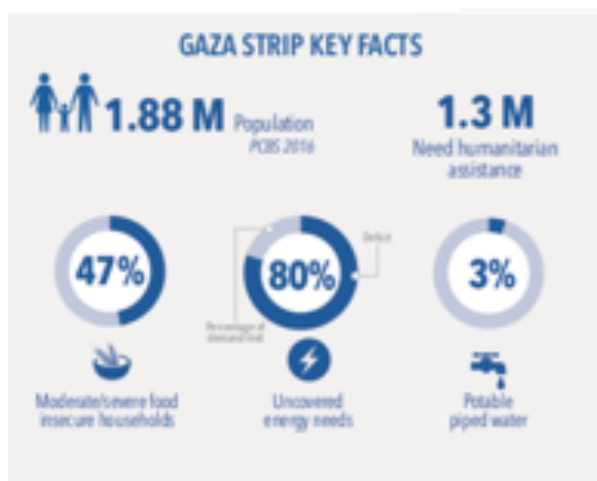
Secondly, there was also the **internal Palestinian divide**. In OCHA's view it was difficult to underestimate the impact of this constant tension and lack of coordination. **Fatah** lead the PA from **Ramallah** and they had some funding worldwide. However, there was another government under Hamas in the Gaza Strip with Hamas viewed by many states as a terrorist organisation. The inability to form one government was creating a real problem for the people of Gaza. Over half of the population - fifty four percent of the people in the Gaza strip - were under 18 (1.9 million people), 70 percent were already refugees from elsewhere, living now in a density of 4500 persons per kilometer.

Thirdly, the outbreak of fighting between Gaza factions and the Israeli army was a real cause of vulnerability. Many people – 20,000 had been previously displaced - were still displaced today as a consequence of war. The turning of people to violence was driven by a sense of hopelessness.

There was a concern from OCHA that the situation was on the edge of a possible new outbreak of hostilities. This had only narrowly been avoided in the recent period. Bad luck and circumstances could lead people into a new war, although it would not achieve anything for either side.

The Blockade

Gaza was surrounded on three sides by a wall - two Israeli borders and one **Egyptian** one.



Israel controlled the sea. Palestinians had been given access to 29 nautical miles originally – but this was now restricted to 6 nautical miles. There were two crossings only. North to Israel was the most important. The second to **Rafah** was controlled by Egypt. For the 3rd one at **Erez** it was very difficult to get a permit. Recently four women had petitioned the Israeli Court to be able to go to university in the West Bank but the ruling had been that students would not be an exception regardless of the lack of security risk they might pose. Israel had in fact wanted the Gaza Strip and the West Bank separated prior to the 2nd Intifada.

The Gaza situation was dire - until May the crossing to Egypt had been closed, although this had been reopened for five days per week after the recent demonstrations and killings at the wall. But only about 300 people a day were allowed out, and the criteria was very unclear, with constant claims being made of corruption in relation to this. There was a waiting list of 30,000 people - waiting 3 months to exit. Even when they got out, there were delays put in their way – due to this, it could take days to get to **Cairo** after any exit.

The vast majority of the younger population under the blockade had never left Gaza. People talked of it as an **open-air prison**. This contributed to the large level of civilian casualties whenever there was conflict - there was no safe haven to flee to.

In terms of the movement of goods, prior to the blockade there had been 3 crossings. **Kerem Shalom** was now the only main crossing point and it suffered extreme restrictions. In terms of imports, at first only exceptional items like medicines got in, however following the Turkish ship incident, things had been eased a bit, but there was now a 'dual use' regulation. All goods such as electronics were restricted, as it was

claimed they might be used for 'other things' – an approach which now prevented so many items getting clearance.

Recently the UN had brokered some supervised function of dual use items. However this elaborate system was slowing everything down – as the goods needed to be agreed by Israel and monitored by the UN.

In housing it had allowed a reconstruction of destroyed buildings - maybe eighty percent of them, but funding was now the issue. For issues like sanitation it was much more difficult - so the question of water supply was also an issue.

“2018 had seen an unemployment rate of 54 percent. For under 29s it was 70 percent. More than half of the population needed full assistance from UNWRA and the World Food Programme”.

All exports had been banned for a time from 2014, although the situation had fluctuated since then. The situation got better at first but exports were presently really low due to the current tensions.

Unemployment

The range of restrictions had meant no employment opportunities were available. 2018 had seen an **unemployment rate of 54 percent**. For under 29s it was 70 percent. **More than half of the population needed full assistance from UNWRA and the World Food Programme.**

The internal Palestinian divide

The internal Palestinian divide continued to be difficult. There had been various attempts and reconciliation agreements signed, but it had been impossible to implement them. For instance the agreement on the **'Government of National Consensus'** of 2017 had not been implemented at ground level. One

problem had been the concept of having one military force and how the transfer to such an authority would actually happen. Plus there were big problems on the civil service side.

From March 2017 till last year, the Palestinian Authority (PA) had been putting pressure on Hamas to get them to transfer power to the PA. This had had disastrous results - for instance **the funding for fuel and power in Gaza had been cut by the PA**. Since March 2017 the situation had therefore deteriorated due to cuts imposed from Ramallah (where the leadership of the Palestinian Authority were situated). This had led to the provision of only 4 hours electricity per day.

This caused problems for life saving interventions. The UN tried to provide emergency fuel for the likes of back-up generators for hospitals and clinics and water and sewage facilities. The reality however was that it took ages for a person to achieve elective (ie not life saving) surgery in Gaza. An example was that today in the **Shiva hospital** for ear nose throat ailments, non-life saving procedures meant you had to wait 18 months. Also the water supply had declined as had the treatment of sewage, with **millions of litres of untreated sewage now being dumped into the sea** making these areas unusable for swimming or other uses.

The Gaza strip was an area that was a very urbanised environment, so if you lived in a building on a high floor you could not depend on electricity for a fridge or a lift. Due to this **the old and vulnerable were especially hard hit**. Qatar were offering fuel to operate more of the four turbines available (one was working at moment). However due to the violence at the fence, Israel had stopped fuel deliveries plus the PA did not want aid to go directly to Hamas as in their view it would solidify their control in the strip.

Weekly demonstrations and killings by the Israeli authorities

Since March people had surrounded the fence every Friday. Hundreds run to the fence and try to damage it. Many had thrown rocks and incendiary balloons. Also there was evidence that home-made Molotov cocktails had been used. But the bulk of demonstrators were not violent, plus there was no evidence this activity threatened life. However there had been a very harsh response, with live ammunition used, and a massive amount of casualties - 200 killed and 21 thousand injured, a quarter of whom, with live ammunition.

Hamas had been accused of stoking this, leading to the death of perhaps 40 children. The level of despair that people face due to everyday pressures was however critical to understand why young people would run to the fence despite dozens of snipers in front of them. Even with manipulation by Hamas it was difficult to think children would do that unless they thought they had nothing to lose.

“The level of despair that people face due to everyday pressures was however critical to understand why young people would run to the fence despite dozens of snipers in front of them”.

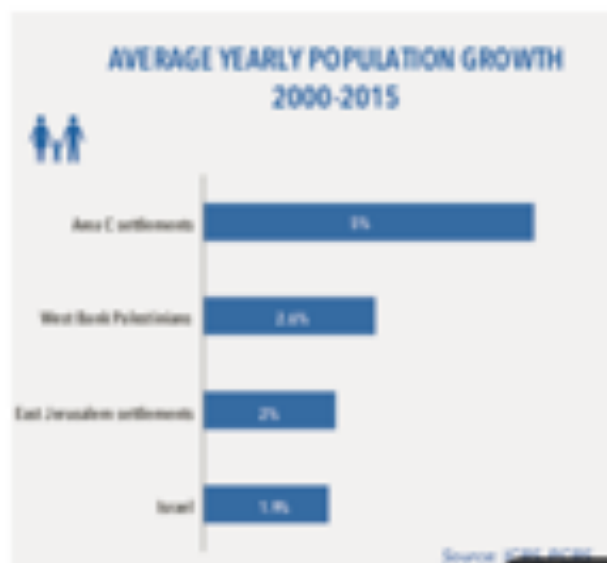
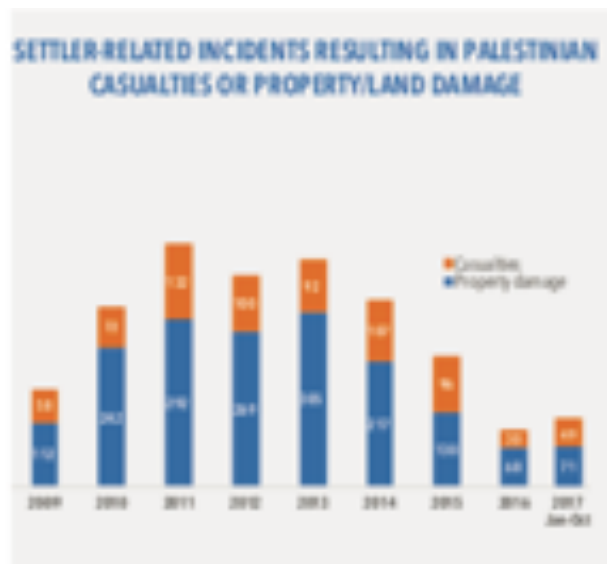
The entry of rockets into the scene had led to media coverage. However, in discussing this, in the view of OCHA it was absolutely crucial to also address the issues like the blockade, the internal divide, and to keep donors on board. Communities in Israel had been affected by the incendiary bombs sent by home-made rockets - thousands of acres of farms had been burned. There had nearly been a war in June due to rockets landing in Israel - although no fatalities had been caused – the anti-rocket security and air raid drills had minimised fatalities in Israel.

In general the relations between Egyptian government and Hamas continued to be one of suspicion. However they were a key player in trying to mediate between Fatah and Hamas and also Hamas and Israel

The situation in the West Bank

In the West Bank there were 3 million Palestinians living in an area of 5,600 square metres.

The Palestinians were subjected to a coercive environment. In some cases the pressures forced families to move. The territory had been fragmented due to restrictions with some restrictions physical and others administrative. The main



settlement policy had led to **600 thousand settlers living in the West Bank** with a third living in East Jerusalem.

Three percent of land had been physically taken, but the Israelis now administered nine percent of land, UN monitoring indicated that **government policies to protect settlers was the main driver of restrictions and hardships for Palestinians in the West Bank**



The wall was impossible to ignore, cutting over Palestinian land and dividing communities

Also the wall was a problem - it encroached into the West Bank. Areas between the wall and green line (ie 1948 borders) were defined as closed military areas. Farmers needed permits to get in and use gates. People faced restrictions in trying to maintain the olive trees - sometimes access was only allowed for the narrowest of harvest times.

The main consideration of the line was to keep the majority of settlers to the west of the line. Only 60 percent of the wall was constructed at present, and there had been a halt to its construction for approximately six years.

There were lots of gaps in the wall, and people were sneaking in to work - about 30,000 people smuggling themselves into Israel for work per day. There were hundreds of road blocks and check points -

705 control points, many on the wall. Sixty-four were fully staffed at all time, and if tension arose then the unmanned ones were closed almost immediately.

Administrative restrictions stopped Palestinians getting into 30 percent of the area – something that particularly hit the Bedouin communities or instance..

In 1990s, the West Bank had been split into 3 jurisdictions A, B, and C. In A and B, Palestinian police were allowed, although Israelis have over-riding power. These areas make up 40 percent of the West Bank containing 80 percent of Palestinians. Area C was where Israelis got exclusive use - this was 60% of the land mass.

Here it was almost impossible for Palestinians to get permits to build or develop. Almost 10 percent of Palestinians lived there. The World Bank had estimated **the economic potential as being 3.5 billion dollars/year**, if the Palestinians could use area C to develop.



A previous Olive Grove, cut down by the Israeli Authorities

One of the ramifications of not getting a permit, was that people then build without a permit, and there are then demolitions. So people built and then the home, school or water wells get demolished due to the area being zoned against Palestinian use. UN figures showed **the rate of approval** had ranged between **2 and 4 percent** over the last 10 years.

In East Jerusalem only 13 percent of the annexed area was planned for Palestinian use. Similar demolitions were taking place. The UN checked this rigorously.

One of the most vulnerable populations were the 30 thousand Bedouins in Area C. They suffered disproportionately. Some years ago the government had announced a plan to relocate the Bedouins to a limited set of villages. The Government said the Bedouins didn't have title over the land or permits. Bedouins however found the sites offered as highly unsuitable to maintain herding and their way of life. The Court gave the green light for demolition and forceable transfer (which is actually a war crime in the view of International Law), and current news was that the government had had to give in at present and stop this approach. Some of the planned constructions on Bedouin lands would end the concept of a possible two state solution, as it would cut right through the West Bank, cutting it in half essentially.

Amongst the questions the delegations asked were some about settlers' violence, which had been reported to us. In the view of OCHA, settlers' violence was a phenomenon that had been on the rise in the last few years.

On the question of the use of water as a geopolitical weapon, OCHA was of the opinion that there was an unfair distribution of water sources with the aquifer from the West Bank being used by Israel although the dependence of Israel on this had been reduced due to desalination plants. It however remained a significant issue for Palestinians although it was not the most difficult issue to solve. Having said that, it was a big problem in Area C for herding. Overall however this was a problem easier to solve than settler expansion and the issue of refugees. Historically there had been economic incentives to move to settlements. In the

opinion of OCHA most of their growth was not for ideological reasons – it was due to issues such as business support, and cheap mortgages for instance which were the incentive. Labour governments in Israel had previously operated this policy as well. The present government had done more to formally annexe settlements into Israel and to give the green light to expansionary projects however. All this meant a further enforcing of Israeli law into the West Bank, and it appeared that **there might be a forthcoming law on annexation proposed soon.**

We then visited the Civic Coalition for Jerusalem.



The Jerusalem Coalition for Civil Rights comprised of a group of 17 organisations working in the occupied territories of East Jerusalem.

As a background, the spokesperson acknowledged that for the last few months, the issue of Jerusalem had been more in the news due to President Trump's announcements regarding it, including the claim that it was the capital of the State of Israel and that the US intended moving its Embassy there – something announced on

14th May - the day Palestinians referred to as the Nakba ('catastrophe'). This was happening at the same time as an Israeli escalation in terms of annexing land and it was felt that Trump's support would give the Israeli authorities a green light to continue this.

The UN had voted against the US government's actions. However the US had cut aid to UNWRA which had been established in 1949 as a reaction to the refugee problem. Most UNWRA funding was currently coming from the US and this action would target the Palestinian right of return.

Much of the discussion with the representatives of the Civic Coalition dealt with the impacts of consecutive occupations.

In 1967, Israel had occupied all of Jerusalem and expanded the border from 6.5 square kilometres to 76.5 square kilometres.

In 1980 the Knesset had passed a '**basic law**' (similar to a constitutional law) in which they had declared that East and West Jerusalem were the united capital of Israel.

In terms of **land confiscation and building settlement**, more than one third of land had been confiscated for 16 large Jewish settlements (35 percent of East Jerusalem now consisted of settlers)

The **absentee's property law** had been used to confiscate properties. People had been driven out and then a census had been held, and if you were 'absent' from the property on that particular night, you lost the property.

We were shown proposals which the Israeli authorities backed for further settlements in an area known as EI (which houses the Bedouins – such as the village of Khan al Ahmar) and which if successful would split

the West Bank between north and south making a two state solution invalid after that.

"The absentee's property law had been used to confiscate properties. People had been driven out and then a census had been held, and if you were 'absent' from the property on that particular night, you lost the property"

This area was considered the eastern gate of Jerusalem and Israel. The eviction of the Bedouins has been currently postponed - maybe temporarily

In the Jerusalem wall - there were now only 5 gates. Before 1993 there had been no checkpoints. The Wall meant that a million Palestinians could not get in without specific permissions from the military. The wall put forty thousand Palestinians outside Jerusalem, and thus in danger of losing their residency.

Recently there had been a bill attempting to change the basic law to remove four large Palestinian areas from Jerusalem.

The Israeli authorities now referred to what they wanted as 'greater Jerusalem' The change that this would make would be that 80 percent of those in this newly conceptualized Jerusalem would be Jewish Israelis. At present, Palestinians were still 39 percent of the population of all Jerusalem. Settlers were currently 35 percent of the East Jerusalem population.

In the view of the civic coalition it was no longer just a question of occupation but rather it was annexation in a colonial settler situation. The West Bank and area C were now both operating under the Israeli Administrative Court thus imposing the Israeli justice system in the West Bank.

Home demolitions:

The coalition reported that in 2015 9 homes had been demolished in Jerusalem, affecting 37 families with 14 children. However, **in 2016 172 homes had been demolished, affecting 400 families and 185 children**

There had been demos at the Bedouin camp in Khan al Ahmar every day for several hundreds of days, and the Israeli authorities had blocked the roads every Friday to cut the area off from any who wished to support the demonstrations. Currently 88 percent of land in East Jerusalem was zoned or reserved for Israeli development, only 12 percent for Palestinians

It could take up to 40 thousand US dollars in fees to fight for planning permission to build. The process could take up to 10 years, therefore Palestinians built without permission.

There were an estimated 22 thousand homes built without permission and 90 thousand Palestinians lived in homes built without permission. What then happened was that the Israeli authorities demolished the houses, the families were forced to pay a fine, and then also to pay the cost of the demolition. **Therefore many families had been forced to demolish their own homes themselves.**

The example was given of the area of Silwan Al Bustan, where it was proposed to demolish 88 buildings – housing 130 families (1400 people) in order to build a Jewish Biblical Park- despite the fact that many of the houses in the area had been built pre-1967.

“Among the dozens of archaeological strata excavated in the City of David, there was no single evidence found that attested to the presence of King

David, or in fact any Judean or other king. Even if we did find a Hebrew inscription saying ‘Welcome to King David’s palace’, that would not justify Ela’ad’s political aims. The residents of Silwan and their ancestors have been living here for hundreds of years and their rights cannot be ignored. Every time a Christian site is found in Israel should the Vatican be given the land and Israelis evicted from their homes?”

-Yonathan Mizrachi, Archaeologist

This was also the case with the forced evictions being undertaken in the area of Sheikh Jarrah. This case had been in the court for 35 years and concerned plans to build 200 residential areas for settlers. One particularly bad incident here had been that an elderly Palestinian woman, aged 93 had had an extension built ‘without permission’ and following this, settlers had evicted her from this part of her house, and moved in. She was now forced to walk past them daily to get to the remaining part of her building.



The 93 year old Palestinian resident sits beyond the part of her property occupied by settlers

This was an ideologically driven occupation, with a series of alternating short-term

settlers occupying the part of the building they had taken over. There had been confrontations there - at times different settlers had had big Alsatian dogs which she found intimidating. She had also been assaulted and hospitalised several times since being evicted from the extension to her home.

One of the constant issues facing Palestinians in Jerusalem was that of residency. In the view of the coalition, it was contrary to natural law for the occupying authorities to be the arbitrators of whether Palestinians should be given 'permanent residency' in what was their own country. The physical form of this residency permit was a chipped ID card up for renewal every 10 years. This contained details of each individual and also their extended families which was seen as part of daily surveillance. It was felt that every 10 years this would now lead to Palestinians having problems when seeking renewal. The question of residency was seen as a political issue and part of attempts to change the demography of Jerusalem.

If you were outside the country for 6 years (as students might be) then you automatically lost your residency in Jerusalem. You constantly had to prove your centre of life was in Jerusalem.

Details eventually released after 18 months of campaigning had shown that 14,550 Palestinians had lost their rights to residency since 2000. The methods under which this was done had varied over time. Originally from 1950 there had been the option for the authorities to revoke your residency under the **'Israeli Loyalty law'**. When this had been challenged the situation had deteriorated with a new law passed now **allowing the interior minister to personally revoke residency**. The complications over residency affected family life.

Getting married did not mean the automatic granting of residency for your

spouse. It had taken one of the coalition members of staff five thousand dollars payment to a lawyer, plus exactly ten years to get residency for their spouse. Often a father therefore might be forced to stay away, in residence outside of Jerusalem, but the children needed to go to school in Jerusalem itself to earn residency of the city. The negative effect of this on families could only be imagined. Sometimes children did not get registered due to these problems. Estimates suggested that perhaps 12 thousand children in East Jerusalem had no 'official identity'. Perhaps nine thousand could not go to school due to this.



East Jerusalem child not at school - 9 thousand do not attend school

And in schools getting qualified teachers was a problem, as it was extremely difficult to source them from outside the city if they did not have residence.

Undermining Palestinian Education

The final topic that the coalition discussed with us was that of education. They had a similar attitude to the teachers and staff we had already met in the East Jerusalem schools.

In the view of the coalition, education was one of the sectors mainly targeted since the 1967

occupation. Restrictions on building schools meant they were currently 2200 classrooms short of what was needed. New schools were not allowed to be built and therefore 66 percent of schools in East Jerusalem were actually in former homes. There was also discrimination in the budget allocation (with 15 percent of the education budget going to East Jerusalem)

The first thing the Israeli authorities had done in 1967 had been to dissolve Palestine local authorities and also dissolve the education department. There had been general strikes against the imposition of the Israeli curriculum following this, resulting in three years of real disruption.

They had then recruited teachers to replace the strikers - even badly qualified ones. Then there had been the attempt to impose the Israeli curriculum but they had eventually been forced to accept the Jordanian version, with some enforced changes in the teaching of history and geography. In 2000 Norway had helped to coordinate a 'non-violent' Palestinian curriculum which had been accepted by the Palestinian Authority, despite criticism from within the Palestinian community.

The Israeli authorities were encouraging the growth of private business in the school sector whilst in some parts of the old city, Palestinians were teaching in classrooms without windows. In 2011 Israeli authorities had decreed that the Palestinian curriculum was no longer to be taught in municipal schools, and this had been the main major issue since this time.

Talking about the Nakba in a municipal school meant you could be arrested and jailed for a year, yet In Israeli textbooks for Arabs in municipal schools they talked of Muslims, Druze, and Christians, but the phrase Palestinian people was never used.

Four hundred and forty five million Shekels (122 million dollars) was provided for Education in East Jerusalem, but all the

money was put together with no adequate provision for Palestinian schools. The official quote from the Israeli education authorities was that "It was time that Arabs in Jerusalem should learn the Israeli curriculum, to strengthen Israeli consolidation in East Jerusalem".

The use of Hebrew language classes had also increased in municipal schools (from 3-6 per week with a decrease in Arabic classes from 6 to 4 per week). There was also an evident attempt change Arabic street names into Hebrew within the city. A final point made for us to ponder on was that in terms of checkpoints seven thousand students have to cross checkpoints every day to go to school and we were asked to imagine what that might do to them.

Road blocks and Khan Al-Ahmar



Khan Al-Ahmar - access blocked off for supporters

We then attempted to go to the **Khan Al-Ahmar Bedouin camp**, but were prevented by an Israeli roadblock. Whilst access was prevented to supporters of the Palestinians, there was a gathering of settlers on the slope overlooking it, protected by the police and with free access for pro-settlers (we saw a woman get out her car and move the barrier and start to drive up).

Our next stop was at the Mount of Olives heights, where we were able to look down over the Jewish cemetery and the Al Aqsa mosque.

On our return we then made a brief stop at the Sheikh Jarrah occupied housing (mentioned above).

Tuesday

We started with a visit to the Al Aqsa Mosque. This is reputed to be the third holiest mosque in the world, and is built on the Temple Mount, known as the Haram esh-Sharif.



Al Aqsa Mosque - a constant scene of conflict

Our guide took us round and explained its historical and political significance. His view was that the issue in Jerusalem wasn't religion but that of identity.

He explained that the mosque had been a consistent scene of conflict following the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem in 1967. It had been set on fire in August 1969 by an **evangelical Christian** then there had been a plot in the 1980s to blow up the mosque by members of the **Gush Emunim** organisation. During the first intifada in 1988, forty worshippers had been injured by Israeli army activity, then 22 Palestinians were killed and 100 injured by soldiers in 1990. In the year 2000 **Ariel Sharon** and members of the Likud protected by 1000 armed soldiers visited the site, - an act which was seen as an extreme provocation and which ended with 24 Palestinians injured by rubber bullets, directly leading to the launching of the 2nd Intifada.



Israeli Troops within the Temple Mount compound -

Following this, 2000 Israeli riot police were sent in and stormed the mosque using live ammunition and rubber bullets, with 4 Palestinians killed and over 400 injured. Since 2014, the Israeli police and army had had a permanent presence there.

According to our guide the Israeli authorities were constantly sending in archeologists seeking to find traces of Jewish civilisation within the mosque - and



A group of Israeli archeologists visit the mosque seeking a pre-Islamic presence in the mosauae

indeed while we were there, we saw a group arriving and being escorted around by the Israeli authorities.

A view from a Jaffa Palestinian



Two former Mosques in Jaffa converted into restaurants

We then visited **Jaffa** and the **Jaffa Coalition**

who took us to the old port, including a visit to Simon the Tanner's residence (mentioned in the Bible)

Currently there were elections for the municipality which the Jaffa coalition were contesting in a unique 'joint list'.

Our guide suggested to us that the history of Jaffa was quite unique and could provide some useful insight into the complexities of Israel and Palestine. He put forward some general comments. One being that there were different and contesting narratives co-existing perhaps due to the inordinate importance of Palestine for religious belief.

The two main narratives were the Palestinian and the Zionist narratives, which disagreed on almost everything, including names, borders, and history. He felt that perhaps too many people were writing the history of his homeland due to this.

What follows was mainly his reading of the situation.

He argued that the changes brought about by the 1948 war had altered the reality of the area totally. **Pre-48 Jaffa had been the biggest and most important Arab Palestinian city,** and also the most important economic centre. It was even important in terms of exports and was the most important focus for Arab culture. In 1946 there had even been

serious consideration of the possibility of holding the Arab Olympic games in Jaffa.

There had been a consistent and thorough policy post-48 of changing the character of Jaffa to remove its Palestinian character and remake it into a Jewish city.

Out of 128,000 Palestinians in Jaffa before the 1948 war, only 3900 were left after war. Then there was an attempt to change the look of Jaffa - the names were all changed from Arabic to Hebrew.

Since the war, it had actually been a space planned by one set of Jewish people for other Jewish people throughout the world with the Palestinians excluded from any part of this planning. It was hard to tell of any real serious involvement of Palestinians since the pre-war Palestinian population had been taken out of the history and



Jaffa had been significantly 'gentrified' for better off Israelis

geography of the city.

Zionism was a settler colonial project. Supporters saw it as a liberation movement, opponents saw it as colonial. Supporters of Zionism had built a society constructed on the basis of racial separation, which 'looked' natural. More than 90 percent of the population in Jaffa had been separated by race.

The five big cities in Israel were seen as being Jewish, however some villages were still seen as 100 percent Palestinian. There was about 10 per cent of the population living in mixed cities of which Jaffa was the most mixed - all neighbourhoods were

mixed - parts of buildings were mixed. So Jaffa was different.

However, in Jaffa there were still high walls of racism and discrimination affecting people. **There were more mixed couples in London than in Jaffa for instance.** Mixed marriages accounted for less than one percent of couples.

At the time of the war in 1948, 95 percent of the population were Palestinians and expulsion had been the preferred approach of Zionists during and following this period. There had been severe bombing during the war and only 3900 Palestinian were left in the city out of 120 thousand - all the rest had been turned into refugees.

Those remaining were seen and treated as part of 'the enemy' so the state took action to have better control of them.

The 3900 had stayed for many reasons – amongst them some had wanted to but were unable to leave. However, all were forced to leave their own areas and pass into one neighbourhood - the **Ajami neighbourhood**. A fence was constructed around this, and the inhabitants were put under military control. It was in effect, a ghetto. Palestinians who stayed in Jaffa lost their basic rights including the right to move - they needed military permission to move from one neighbourhood to another. Therefore they became a minority in their own homeland. One way of looking at it was that Israel had 'migrated to the Palestinians' and expelled them, as Palestinians had been 'born to the wrong race'. There had been plenty of room, but Palestinians were of the wrong race.

“Palestinians who stayed in Jaffa lost their basic rights including the right to move - they needed military permission to move from one neighbourhood to another. Therefore they became a minority in their own homeland”.

Our guide stressed the effect of this treatment on the human psyche – losing your human environment and all the other members of your community that you had before the war caused profound distress and uncertainty. In addition, it was impossible to find out where people had ended up abroad as this would have meant dealing with 'enemy states' something impossible to do. The new occupiers and administrators of the city decided that Palestinians did not have a national identity since there was no Palestinian nationality.

The second ordeal facing the people of Jaffa was the Nakba – and the way this progressed could be seen as the biggest armed robbery in the 20th century – something that had taken place through the absentee law.

Under this law, the new authorities sent its workers to count 'neglected property' - if you were not in the property on that date (through being expelled) then you lost the property. The Palestinians left in Jaffa had been put in one neighbourhood, but their property was in the next neighbourhood. For those who had stayed this economic loss was therefore worse - Jaffa was small which meant you would pass by your house and see others in it. **This had led to the Palestinians who had remained being 'economically crushed'.**



The third catastrophe for the remaining Palestinians was what the new Israeli authorities referred to as co-existence which **actually consisted of moving Israeli citizens into Jaffa, including into the area of Ajami**. Often the

houses Palestinians had been living in were then part occupied by Israelis limiting even more any autonomy that they might have had.

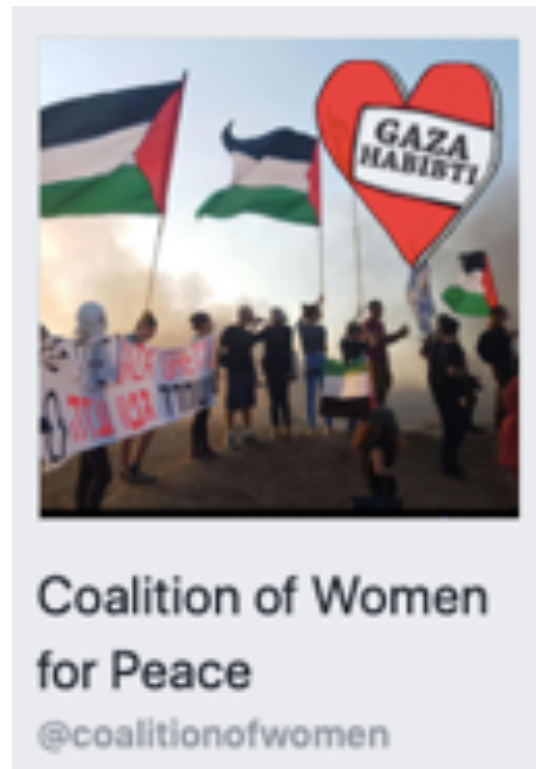
The outcomes of this treatment were seen in the resultant massive increase in cases of clinical depression, alcoholism and drug dependency within the remaining Palestinian community something which disproportionately affected men – most women being doubly burdened with domestic responsibilities.

From a city that had confidently hoped and planned for the Middle East Olympic Games in 1946, **Jaffa had ended up as a small criminal enclave, which was then annexed to Tel Aviv in 1950.**

In terms of the future our guide showed some optimism, stating that the fact there were now 20 thousand Palestinians left in Jaffa was important. There were 2 million members of the Jewish community and the Palestines were not learning their history in schools. However the fact that the Palestinian community did not disappear meant a lot for the past and could mean more for the future.

A lot had changed since 1950 – they had built an NGO in Jaffa - the Jaffa Youth Movement and they thought that through education they could make serious social change. They had a name for this project - **Jaffa the Future.** Details of this are found in **Appendix 2.**

Women's Coalition for Peace



Our final meeting on the Wednesday was with the Women's Coalition for Peace. During the discussion the impressions I gained were the following.

The Coalition had started in 2000 during the 2nd intifada to bring women together, and promote their voice. **It was thought that activist spaces were not always friendly for women, and women's voices were not often heard.**

The Coalition, which was now a self standing organization were known for what was termed economic activism – they had started a research centre, on companies that profited from the occupation. In addition to this, they raised awareness of the military industries' activity in Israel. It could be argued that the profits for these firms were based on the firms' experiences of keeping down the people of Gaza which could be seen as being used as a testing ground. Israel also exported to countries which often had military embargoes

imposed on them by the UN and others. Sales by the Israeli government could be used as a lever to gain diplomatic support. One of the activities of the coalition was that of **bring the reality of the occupation into feminist discourse and vice versa**. They were co-led by Palestine and Israeli women working together in what was known in '48' Israel.

It could be argued that there were two very powerful movements active - a powerful Israeli feminist movement and similarly powerful Palestine women. There had been discussions taking place around UN Resolution 1325 on the impact of conflict on women. However, there had been difficulties in this as it did not include Palestinian women – something that made further work in this area by the coalition impossible.

Civil society could be seen as divided in Israel – there was Palestinian and Israeli 'civil society.' Within this, it was further divided into groups that worked on occupation related issues, and others who did other things.

In this way, if you were linked to LGBT groups for instance you wouldn't see yourselves as part of the same civil society as the coalition's campaigns.

The discussion on women's roles in the military was a current one in Israel. The position of the coalition was that militarism was and is violence against women, and they tried to raise awareness of intersectionality and a wider sense of justice – but not only for Jewish women serving in the military who were demanding their rights.

Violence against women involved in activism was definitely sexualised and gender based. The coalition had carried out a survey on womens' sense of safety in activism and

found most women had experienced this as a problem from the police, army, passers-by and others.

Evidence suggested that there were lots of women who experienced burnout and domestic violence within activism. If these women were forced to step back, then, these voices would not be heard within the movement. **The coalition therefore tried to create safer spaces for women to do activism**, where women could determine the rules, and also gave encouragement to other organisations to do the same.

In all the things done by the coalition, they talked of the gendered aspect of the occupation, not just of 1967, Gaza and the West Bank, but also about the events of 1948 and the Nakba.

Last year there had been a conference on the military industry, where activists from throughout the world against militarization had been invited. It had also been possible to have the on-screen presence of 3 women from Gaza who talked about the daily reality of women in Gaza.

Talking to my colleagues, and from publicly available information it was clear that organisations such as the coalition were being targeted by right wing groups within Israel, and by the Israeli authorities themselves. It was now standard for organisations such as the coalition to be threatened with any funding to be revoked and increasing hostility from right wing groups falsely claiming that working in this area meant complicity in 'funding terrorism' which was clearly nonsense. Pressure was being put on external funders under the false premises that the coalition was friendly to terrorists. Personal threats against staff were increasing as was pressure to deprive such organisations of accommodation and facilities. The 'shift to the right' in Israeli society as a whole made

activity by settlers from the overlooking **Buchav Jacob** settlement, who had fired on the school in the past. We could see the settlement on the nearby crown of the hill. When this topics came up, one of the Palestinians we spoke to reported that during his wedding in the area, his brother's car had been hit by 5 bullets.



The settlement of Buchav Jacob from where bullets had previously been fired at the school

As it was in a Palestinian Area, the building was custom built (by the Norwegians in 2000) and was much more modern than anything we had seen in East Jerusalem.



Ramallah School together with their award winning teacher

We then visited the GUPT in the local PLO and union offices, meeting with a delegation, which consisted of their Arabic affairs specialist, (who was a maths teacher), plus the union's international secretary (a history teacher), and their General Secretary (an electrical engineer) It was extremely useful for us to meet representatives of the GUPT - the union for those working in the educational sector.

The representatives thanked us for our



اتحاد المعلمين يستقبل وفدين من نظيره الألماني والبريطاني

رام الله- الحياة الجديدة: استقبلت لائحة الاتحاد العام للمعلمين الفلسطينيين وفدًا من اتحاد المعلمين البريطانيين في إطار التعاون وتبادل الخبرات التربوية والتعليمية. واجتمع وفد المعلمين البريطانيين بالوكالة العامة لاتحاد المعلمين الفلسطينيين في مقر اللائحة العامة وحدا الأحياء من تنظيمات وزارة التعليم في رام الله. وقد حضر اللقاء ممثلو اللائحة العامة واتحاد المعلمين الفلسطينيين في رام الله، بالإضافة إلى ممثلين من الاتحاد البريطاني. وتناول اللقاء موضوعات تتعلق بالعملية التعليمية والتربوية، والتحديات التي تواجهها، وكذلك طرق تطويرها. كما تم مناقشة سبل التعاون المشترك بين الاتحادين، والتحديات التي تواجهها، وكذلك طرق تطويرها. كما تم مناقشة سبل التعاون المشترك بين الاتحادين، والتحديات التي تواجهها، وكذلك طرق تطويرها.

Facebook report of our meeting with the GUPT

attendance at the teachers' meeting in Tulkarm. They felt that their relationship with UK Educational unions had been of historic benefit to them, and also felt it was useful for members to see another Trade Union observing the elections which had now opened for the union leadership. They felt that with new leaders more than one thing would change and they looked at working to settle existing problems in the sector.

They outlined some of their history. They had been founded in 1969 and had **10 branches in the West Bank, seven in Gaza, and seven in other Arab countries.** They were also looking to establish branches in Latin America as they had many Palestinian teachers there.

They felt that their work was not only to improve the conditions and rights of local teachers, they worked to try to link all Palestinian teachers, even those abroad. At present they were endeavouring to give their services via the Palestinian embassies. Although they felt they had a long history of activity they wanted to give a snapshot of what they had been doing in the last 10 years or so.

Nine years previously they had managed to get a substantial increase in teachers'

salaries – winning a rise of almost 35 percent due to a long-term agreement with the Palestinian Authority. They had also helped the civil service develop the regulations under which teachers worked – this was now incorporated into civil law.

Teachers' salaries were almost higher than the salary of many managers with some being more than was earned by a director in the education ministry – something that they considered was a positive outcome of their work.

Most of their executive secretaries were young, (by which they meant between 30 and 40) and they felt that the most important result of their current elections would be that of the leaders of the teachers, maybe 75 percent of them would be in this age category.

They had been forced to strike on many occasions in their negotiations with the PA for teachers – in fact they had just defeated the PA in court over their right to take action, which the PA were trying to curb.

They were active in many ways – and this was wider than just industrial action. Two weeks previously they had published a poetry book of teachers' contributions which was a first for them, although they hoped to repeat the exercise in the future.

They were also active trying to make becoming a teacher a welcoming activity – every year now they had a celebration for all the new teachers in Palestine to which those who were retiring were also invited. In November they had created 1,200 new teacher posts in Ramallah and were now working with Al Quds university in order to see how to empower the position of the teacher in Palestinian society.

They faced issues such as violence against teachers from students and also sometimes parents, and they were hoping to examine this through further research. Again this

was the first time they had cooperated directly with universities.

“Teachers' salaries were almost higher than the salary of many managers with some being more than was earned by a director in the education ministry – something that they considered was a positive outcome of their work”.

This was quite a re-orientation of their work. For the first time also they had helped 57 students to get scholarships to university – through scholarships aimed at the sons and daughters of teachers This saved substantial fees parents would otherwise have to pay. They had also initiated similar agreements with universities outside Palestine. Another positive thing that they had done was sign a protocol with the Palestinian police, regarding how with teachers were dealt with if issues arose with the aim of giving the teacher in society the respect they deserved.

They aimed to empower teachers in every field. In the economic field they had signed discount agreements with companies - ie supermarkets, banks and hospitals. To overcome the delay in obtaining first salaries (which sometimes lasted into four months of their employment) the union had signed an agreement with the national banks to give them a salary advance, guaranteed by the GUPT. These were all 'firsts' for the GUPT which they were proud of but they commented that once they had solved these problems, other new ones appeared.

Workshops regarding teachers' rights, duties, and Palestinian Law, had taken place for members, with a throughput of up to 1,500 people, new teachers, every year. Last year this had been done with the help of

the French Trade Unions. This year it was financed by themselves. They cooperated with Norway in this area, and also with the NUT/NEU.

They also initiated workshops on gender and capacity building for female Trade Union members and believed the result of that was a good percentage of women joining and also being candidates in the recent elections for the three branches where voting had been completed.

In the executive committee in Tulkrum women made up 42 percent of the members, in Jericho 45 percent and elsewhere the percentage was approximately 35.

They were involved in sports provision as well - tennis for female teachers and football for male teachers. For the first time they had run a workshop in the Gaza Strip with the co-operation of the NUT/NEU on teachers' rights. As a union they were very thankful for our support politically on the Palestinian problem.

A very informative question and answer session then took place which can be found in **Appendix 3**

Following this we went to meet Sabri Sidem, the Minister for Education and a former graduate of Imperial College London.



Waiting for the arrival of the Education minister

The minister spoke to us about trying to present a positive outlook to Palestinians – as educators to be a ‘ministry of hope’ applying ethics to how one ought to live and work. However this was not particularly easy when students woke every

morning and saw more checkpoints and the wall snaking through Palestinian communities.

The ministry was attempting to reform their sector but immediate events had to



The minister argued for the responsibilities of educationalists to be positive about the possibilities for the future

be tackled – sometimes ones that achieved more media coverage. They had had to deal with the enforced dismantling of a mobile school the previous day – where Palestinian children in a travelling community had been getting taught in caravans, which the Israeli authorities had then dismantled.

The ministry was resisting such attacks and the current attempts to get rid of another three mobile schools – they felt that education was paramount and could not be allowed to be destroyed, although such attacks hit childrens’ hopes hard. In his view **‘Palestinians were also the people of Abraham, and thus could have faith in the future. People could not be thrown into the sea’** in his view, and the Palestinians had a saying that a crisis always deepened before it lightened up. He felt that despite all these problems, someday the Palestinians would be able to co-exist with the Israelis successfully.

He outlined some of the successes of the Palestinian educational sector despite adversity – they had a teacher who had won a world wide award (he was referring to Hanan Al Hroub, who we had met earlier in our visit). Currently they also had a school shortlisted to be the best Arab school in the Arab world – they had won

this award in 2016, and the shortlisted school was called the ‘Right of Return’ school. He quoted Nelson Mandela who had said that education was the most powerful weapon a people could have, adding that **they didn’t want to kill Israelis, they wanted to give birth to Palestine.**

The minister gave us some more details of the closure by the authorities of a Palestinian school the previous week, due to alleged stone throwing. The minister accompanied the pupils in, together with the trade unions and parents after which the Palestinian national anthem had been played.

The army commander under whose orders the school had been closed, had been forced to give in to the pressure of this peaceful show of determination and solidarity. In the words of the minister “Anyone who is educated is actually good for Israel, being educated is better than being an extremist, or a lunatic or useless” He appreciated the change in public opinion in Britain, which he believed had never been as high in its support for Palestine – this was important given the pressure that President Trump was attempting to impose. He ended his introduction by reminding us that from January there would be no support from the US for Education – which would particularly hit Jerusalem hard.



Examples of genuine Palestinian textbooks produced under the auspices of the Norwegians, and doctored versions produced by the Israeli authorities

Finally he illustrated some examples of how their curriculum was being challenged by showing us physical copies of Palestinian textbooks prepared under Norwegian supervision, that the Israeli authorities had downloaded from the net, doctored and reprinted, to take out any mention of aspects of Palestinian culture or of Palestinian history that they disagreed with, such as the Intifada.

Following his introduction, we had a question and answer session which can be found in **Appendix 4**

The next stop for us then was a visit to the **Yasser Arafat Museum**, and then a visit to the **Defence for Children International Organisation.**

Defence for Children International

DCI had many sections around the world,



organised according to particular local needs. Here it concentrated on violations by the Israeli authorities, but they also looked at children’s rights under the Palestinian Authority. Due to limited resources, they could only concentrate on the right or life and to liberty and therefore did not document any other violations.

Since the beginning of the 2nd intifada 2100 children had been killed, mostly in the Gaza Strip. Since the war in the Summer of 2014, 547 Palestinian children had been killed. The Israeli government did not use the proportionality principle. Their doctrine meant that the army had the right to fire into civilian areas to get them to pressurise their own leadership to stop the war.



Children should never be a target, or combatant, irrespective of which side of the conflict they find themselves on

There was another directive which was activated when there was an attempt to arrest an Israeli soldier. This allowed for opening fire with no restrictions even if it led to a killed soldier. Some viewed this as being because a killed soldier was better than a kidnapped one, as it prevented the authorities being forced into negotiations.

An additional area of work carried out by DCI consisted of documenting the maiming of children, plus any use of children as a human shield. Though Israel had officially banned this since 2004, evidence showed that they had used this approach in the period since, with the last case documented being during the 2014 war, when they put a child in front of them when searching for explosives.

The other issue worked on was in relation to child prisoners, including any ill treatment or torture which is prohibited. Finally DCI also worked through their legal unit, where they provided free legal services when children were up in front of a court, but also visited them when they were arrested.

For the first 3 months, children under arrest cannot get family visits, since the permit to visit has to go via the international Red Cross, which usually takes about 3 months. So, children do not have

any contact with their family and vice versa. DCI therefore tried to make this link by informing both groups of what had happened. Also they collected statements from children in order to tell lawyers what they were being subjected to. Through all of this it gave DCI a picture of how the system was (not) working. They submitted data to the relevant UN committees, since Israel had signed most conventions, however Israel stated that these conventions were not applicable. The official Israeli position is that it was humanitarian law that counts, but DCI were unclear as to what this meant to them.

Defence For Children International tried to provide foreign parliamentarians with information so that they could raise the issues with their own parliamentarians to pressurise Israel. This was done in many countries – they tried to concretise the criticism into actions and procedures in order to get Israel to stick to its commitments.

In terms of child protection, in their child justice unit, they also provided legal services to children in conflict with Palestinian Authority laws, and via their socialisation unit they tried to examine what the best laws that could be applicable for children.

In 2016 there was a new child protection law brought in which officially matched international standards, but in reality DCI found that there still existed a vast gap to bridge. Due to this they constantly needed to challenge existing practice, in order to make the gap less between the law and actual practice.

Child prisoners

DCI started from the reality of existing discrimination due to two systems - a legal military system for Palestinians and the ordinary Israeli civil system, dealing with Israeli citizens.

The purpose of the latter was to rehabilitate and integrate. But the former was aimed at suppression and control. Under the latter, the child had a right to be accompanied by a parent when questioned, but this did not exist for Palestinian children. After East Jerusalem had been annexed, they in theory used the civil system, but in practice Palestinian children were treated like their counterparts elsewhere.



Children have their rights to dreams, not detention

There had been negative legal changes by Israel which had made the system deteriorate. For instance it had previously been the case that children could not be jailed till the age of 14, but this was altered to allow prison sentences from age 12 if the children had undertaken 'nationally motivated crimes'. This was clear discrimination – if young Israeli settlers, were apprehended, they were treated under the civil system.

Approximately 700 Palestinian children were arrested every year - but many others are were also arrested and then quickly released due to no evidence offered.

Under the military system, the age of culpability was 12, **and even if you were arrested for a few minutes this would be a traumatic thing at such a young age.** Being put into a military jeep was a terrifying experience. Looking at military rule it was worth noting that since the beginning of the occupation, Israel had issued more than 1800 military orders controlling almost all aspect of life, **all issued by a military commander, who had legislative, in fact almost dictatorial powers. The judges were also part of the army and under their supervision.**

An example of how the laws were applied could be seen in relation to stone throwing. Under military law the maximum sentence for throwing stones was 20 years, but usually for children it was 6-9 months in practice. Ostensibly there was a maximum of 6 months for children aged 12 to 13, and for 14 to 15 year olds it was one year. Once they are 16, however they were treated like adults - and could receive a life sentence. There was also an approach that military commanders used to increase sentences however, since if the child was 14 to 15 then another clause could be applied, one that stated that the minimum sentence would not apply if the offence had a maximum sentence of over 5 years - which stone throwing did.

DCI had found that the Israeli civil system was hard to change, but military orders could be and sometimes were changed overnight which caused lawyers real problems.

The way arrests were carried out was to exert maximum impact on the whole community. Children were

usually arrested during the night - the army would surround the house, and could force their way in, collecting all the family into one room. The child would be identified for arrest. Often no information was given as to why they were being arrested, or where they were being taken to. The child was handcuffed and blindfolded, taken to the jeep and then put on the metal floor. During the trip to interrogation centre, children suffered all sorts of verbal humiliation to prepare them for interrogation. They usually arrived sleepy, terrified, and without a family member accompanying, or audio visual recording being taken. The main purpose of this procedure was to extract a speedy confession.

CDI had observed that in the last period, the Army had used more psychological methods of torture rather than physical methods. If they beat people, then people would resist more. **If they used psychological methods - threatening, humiliating or intimidation, then the child would begin to blame themselves.**

Amongst the threats used were that they would arrest the parents, remove their permits to work, and impose prison sentences against them. Children tended to believe what the interrogators suggested. It conveyed the message to the child that they had been forgotten about, and that the interrogator could do what they like. There was also no other channel to challenge the interrogator. CDI had investigated the situation of children arrested in 2017, and had found that the average amount of solitary imprisonment given was 14 days with absolutely no interaction with other humans.

CDI could see the effect of this when they eventually got to them. Often children tried to retell their experience making a long story very very short, but CDI tried to take it step by step slowly, and very specific.

Most children did not know their rights so did not know the specifics of what was legally wrong in how they had been treated.

CDI believed they could see the effect of the long periods of solitary on how children



Image of child stone thrower from Yasser Arafat museum

reacted. One child had told CDI that the interrogator was a very kind man and in many ways that he was better than his father. This child had been in solitary confinement for 22 days and the first interaction he had had with anyone, was with the interrogator, so naturally he wanted to do anything he could to lengthen the time with the interrogator and gain more human interaction.

Usually at the end of the interrogation, most children gave 'confessions' (although it was important to note that some had indeed committed offences). Nevertheless it was important to remember they had rights - to be free from ill treatment and torture. Children thought confession was the quickest way to get

everything stopped. **Sometimes the confessions were in Hebrew, and were signed even if the child did not understand the language.**

The tactics of the presiding judge often created difficulties for defence lawyers. If a defence lawyer said the result been achieved by force the judge would normally say that it was not possible to discuss that allegation there, and call for another court to be established to investigate this. However there would be no individual recording of the interrogation. Neither did this type of interrogation leave physical marks, which could be used by the defence lawyer. This meant that often defence lawyers were forced in to attempting plea bargaining, hoping in response to a guilty plea, to get the process stopped very early. **This caused a real problem, because if the system was challenged, the child paid the price** - being kept in for all the time it would take. Plus experience was that judges usually became more strict if their decisions were challenged which in the past had led to a change of proposed sentence from 4 to 6 months in order to pressurise the lawyer not to challenge the original sentence.



From the Defence of Children International Website

Conviction rates in military courts were 99.75 percent – it was like a factory, and it was also worth noting that the majority of children were in Israeli prisons which were not in the Palestinian Authority area though sending prisoners to the country of

occupation is actually against international law. Children were put into adult prisons and were monitored during day by other prisoners, but were segregated at night.

In general, a Court decision usually led to a prison sentence or suspended sentence or a fine against the family. In fact all three together, was common i.e. 6 months imprisonment, 5 months suspended sentence following that, and a fine for the family.

There were also more insidious longer-term effects on children following such treatment and separation from their family and education.

During the first 3 months the children got no contact with their family although the family could attend the 2-3 minute court appearances. In prison, the children received a standardised 3-4 grade education although they might be in 10-12 grade for instance and needless to say there was no Palestinian curriculum. **CDI were not a rehabilitation organisation but they believed that every child who had passed through this system would be psychologically damaged.**

The problem was related to the atmosphere the authorities imposed.

Most prisoners, particularly children, did not accept or notice that changes were happening to them insidiously in terms of what they become normalized to accept etc. But parents knew their children were different post-prison.

Although the Israeli military system had had to be updated for the benefits of Public Relations due to the constant criticism it got this was more on the surface than in substance. Previously only Palestinians under the age of 16 were categorized as children whilst for Israelis in the civil system a child was someone under 18 .

This was then levelled out at 18, and since then a military juvenile court had been

instigated, but this had not led to any real positive change. Affairs were conducted behind closed doors ostensibly 'for the privacy of the child' and lawyers could only get reports after the child had been indicted. The constant amendments to military court practice were also very hard to understand or follow. Amendments had affected which languages could be used in which courts - but only for 'criminal' cases under the old Jordanian penal code. There was a view that this had been done to lead the international community up a blind alley, believing there had been substantive changes which was not the case. Israel argued that humanitarian law allowed them to impose military courts which was true, **but did not take into account the settlements or occupation and the fact that the judge himself could be a settler therefore illegal himself.**

CDI tried to spread knowledge of legal rights by running workshops encouraging children to ask about their rights if they are confronted by the military so that they were not just passive, but proactive and asking - even if their asks went on to be ignored. It made the child feel they were empowered and this work was done in conjunction with the Ministry of Education in areas where children were more likely to be arrested. CDI also trained school counsellors to give advice to children, especially when one child had been arrested.

Our delegation asked further questions which can be found in **Appendix 5**

Thursday

This involved activities in Hebron - a place of high tension due to the activities of some very ideologically driven settlers.

Meeting University Trade Union activists

For the UCU delegation, the first meeting



Some solidarity gifts from the UCU to our counterparts in Hebron

was with the main representative of the equivalent of the UCU, at their base in the Palestine Polytechnic University in Hebron. We were received very cordially, and the delegation talked very positively of the work Sally Hunt and others had done with them in the past.

We were interested to find out that the main problems facing union members in universities were very similar to those we faced in the UK i.e. **pension reform; casualisation and the position of women in universities.**

We talked of the situation in Gaza and the particular problems there. In Gaza they let us know that union members did not need to pay to join/ keep their membership, and that contact was made via on-screen or telephone. **They mentioned that the position in the Islamic Uni in Gaza was a particular problem due to Hamas pressure** - any independent organisation that didn't promote Hamas, was seen as suspect, and therefore

academics in that university were prevented from joining the union.

On the issue of working with any positive academics in Israeli Higher Education, they said that they could not sit down with Israeli academics as they were part of the occupation.

Next our hosts took us to Hebron Market and the old town - the heart of the tension, due to a group of 400 very ideological settlers having moved into the centre of the city, mostly in the upper stories of the buildings above and in the market. The settlers were protected by over 2000 troops.



Once a bustling market, whole areas of Hebron market were deserted, due to the tension caused by the settlers enclave

We experienced parts of the market totally deserted due to the harassment of the market community by the settlers. Objects had been constantly thrown down onto passers-by. Despite the metal netting above the passages (you could still see some lumps of concrete on it), the harassment seemed to have had an effect. The atmosphere was overall much more subdued than other markets we had visited, despite subsidies from the Palestinian Authority, inducements for major shops to set up there and sell cheaply, plus banks (which seemed empty) and a well provided dental practice. An attractive 'Peace Cafe' furnished and stocked by the PA, was totally

empty when we visited. Parts of the market network had also been closed off as they led to the areas the settlers had occupied.



A 'Peace Cafe' provided by the PA was totally deserted when we visited

According to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, a survey they had carried out in 2006 showed that almost 1020 Palestinian homes in the Old City and more than 1800 business had closed down due to the Israeli settler take-over. This was 42 percent of housing in the district, and more than three-quarters of the businesses.

Elsewhere, business continued as usual, although the atmosphere in this market was much more low-key compared to other Palestinian markets



'Existence is Resistance' was the slogan we saw quite a few times in the occupied territories



Despite the difficult conditions, there was no doubt that those in the market who we met appreciated our solidarity

Following the visit to the market, we then visited the **Al Ibrahimi** mosque, access to which involved a very unfriendly checkpoint entry manned by Israeli troops.

In 1994 an American Israeli had massacred 29 Muslims at prayer there during Ramadan, and injured many more. He had been a member of the violently extremist '**Jewish Defense League**' founded by extremist **Rabbi Meir Kahane**. Two months after this saw the first suicide bomb carried out against Israeli civilians, with Hamas claiming responsibility for this, and attributing it to a reaction to the mosque massacre.

The result of the original killings was that the Israeli Army forcibly partitioned the Mosque, commandeering the majority of it. We then visited a **food distribution centre** in the centre, and after lunch, a ceramics factory.

Following our visit to Hebron, we proceeded to Bethlehem where we visited the **Aida Refugee Camp**, and **Lajee**



Hebron Food distribution centre

Arts Centre, then the **Church of the Nativity**.

The Aida refugee camp was very distressing in terms of the conditions. We saw bullet holes in the doors of the UN school there, and watched a video (in the Lajee Centre), taken from the spot we were standing at, which catalogued the killing of a 13 year old.



Watchtower within the Aida Refugee camp, Bethlehem

The video had also shown the firing of gas canisters into the Lajee centre itself (captured on CCTV) and the neighbouring play park when it had been full of children playing.

One of the staff who worked at the Lajee centre, had himself been shot in the face by a rubber bullet and still had the scars.

Despite the adversity they were living with the Lajee centre staff expressed their determination to remain, given the cultural role that arts could play in Palestinian life.



Mural cataloguing children killed after a flare up of hostilities during 2014



Bullet holes in the door of a UNWRA (UN) run school opposite the watchtower in Aida camp



The Lajee Arts Centre - a mark of cultural resistance



Entrance to the camp seen from the doorway of the Lajee centre



Volunteers constructing furniture on the roof of the centre - made into a small garden



Local young people demonstrating some dance for us in the centre



US made gas canister fired into the Lajee centre in a previous incursion



Entering Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem

Garden of Olives, Mary's Tomb, the Via Dolorosa and the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.



The only person having a problem accessing the Wailing wall area was our Muslim member of the delegation, about which phone calls were made, before she was given access.

Many of the delegation including myself had our bags searched at the airport - I had my padlock snipped and taken. However markedly worse treatment was given again to the only Muslim member of the



A reminder of one of the children shot just outside the Lajee centre



delegation - the young women mentioned above who was stopped 5 times between the taxi dropping her at the Airport, and getting to the gate. She was also taken aside and made to strip in a cubicle by two female border guards, which naturally she found an extremely humiliating experience.

The visit to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem however could not have been more different – with minimal police/ army presence and full of tourists, gift shops and religious artefacts.

Friday

Before leaving for the airport in Tel Aviv, we had a whistle stop tour of Gethsemani, the

Last thoughts are thanks to the colleagues who we accompanied on the trip. They were fantastic and very supportive during the whole visit. Each morning, with no exceptions we were on the road by 7.45 a.m. only returning after 7.30 at night but not a minute was wasted.

Douglas Chalmers October 2018



Some of the pupils at an East Jerusalem boys school in their outdoor assembly

Appendix I: Q & A with teachers in East Jerusalem

Question: *Is it possible to find out about the contents of the Palestinian curriculum?*

Answer: *Palestine has all its textbooks on-line - they appear under the eye of international supervision. In fact the creation and content of much of them was 'supervised' by the Norwegian government – which had actually led to a lot of criticism from the Palestinian community. It was suggested that there should also be a comparison with the censored narrative in the Israeli books - the subject of a recent piece of research by an Israeli academic.*

Question: *How are children educated if they are under house arrest?*

Answer: *Sometimes we don't know they are – for instance if they are in a municipal ie non-Palestinian school. If we do know, then we have mobile teachers who visit and provide worksheets and other materials, - we want to keep their connection with the school.*

It's difficult psychologically. Sometimes students get deported to another area. In that case we try to co-ordinate with a local school.

Question: *Can you tell us about teachers' salaries and living standards?*

Answer: *The Palestinian administration pays the teachers' salaries, but in relative terms for living in Jerusalem, they are very low - approximately a third of what is paid in Israeli schools. Some teachers therefore 'leak' into the other sector, and we sometimes have to wait for months for instance for a maths teacher - plus teachers from outside Jerusalem usually don't get a permit to live here.*

Question: *What happens if teachers or pupils are victimised under Israeli control?*

Answer: *In these circumstances they're under the direct control of Israeli intelligence. Many teachers have lost their jobs through a single comment on Facebook. To overcome this constant pressure, Palestinian schools therefore try to use cultural activities in the evening for the purposes of solidarity.*

Question: What choice of schools is there for parents?

Answer: The choice is limited - sometimes for instance there are no boys' schools, so if you're not wanting to go to municipal one you have to go private. Here we are over capacity so we have a real problem with pupils forced to go elsewhere.

Question: What class sizes do you have? And what ages of pupils in the classes?

Answer: All pupils are of same age in each class. How many are in the class depends on size of classroom. Sometimes 15 pupils are there with proper space only for 3 desks really. Every classroom has to accommodate as many as possible in the circumstances.

Question: What if external events happen - say a school pupil's friend has been arrested?

Answer: We have a special education department with a counsellor to help release anger and worry. We even use anger management, as it might save childrens' lives. Teenagers are so proud - and this causes problems and dangers if they are stopped by soldiers. So, we try to help them manage anger so they can save their lives.

Question: Why do pupils get put under house arrest?

Answer: It's normally for offences like stone throwing - they're aged 10, so please don't get the impression that guns or the like are involved! The youngest age of someone under house arrest has been 10. If they are deported, they may have to live at a relative's house, or the family must move to be with the child, so they have to rent. Of course in that situation, the relatives have to deal with the kids' anger at being housebound – often very difficult.

Deportation from Jerusalem is significant in itself, since if you move, you lose your residency rights. According to Israeli interior law, you need to prove that for the past seven years Jerusalem has been the centre of your life - so living in Ramallah is an issue if you want to keep residence rights. So, in reality children need to cross checkpoints, to get stamps with the Jerusalem location on them to try to keep their residence rights.

Appendix 2: Jaffa The Future.



In 2010, seven students had met up with the aim of doing something for their community and this had developed into a growing group. In July 2010 they had managed to gather more than 30 individuals although all with different priorities. They then had seminars in Ramallah, with Palestinian councillors to try to agree on aims. The **Jaffa Youth Movement** had then been created from this with 5 key targets

Firstly, to keep and develop the Palestinian identity in Jaffa. **Secondly** as they felt they were living in a very ugly chauvinistic society they wanted equality in society – it was indivisible, both for women as well as for national identity. Political equality needed social equality.

Thirdly, they aimed to retain the status of the Arabic language in their community.

Fourthly, they wanted young people to volunteer in society -and become involved.

Finally they wished to help high school students get their academic careers and progress to university.

This project was called **Jaffa The Future**. They wanted to build a young democratic, proud leadership who could give things back to their community. **At present only 10 percent of the population had an academic certificate** and unfortunately for many young men, the leading role models were criminals.

The public education system in Jaffa was very very weak. The **Jaffa Youth Movement** tried to choose promising students from within the public system and tried to help them pass their examinations. They also took them to see other young people in Palestine and to work on identity and leadership. They did not want young people to live with an inferiority complex.

They felt that the exam to get to university was a hard and in many aspects a racist one and thus they tried to help students to overcome this. We had started three years previously

with one group and now 70 students were in 3 groups. Their first budget had been \$10,000, the second year had raised \$50,000, and the third year had \$80,000. Next year it would be \$100,000 with the help of the Galilee foundation in London.

If UK organisations wished to help and were involved in NGOs related to student exchanges this could be very helpful, The students were between 15 and 18 years old. Scholarship for universities were also very important as it was very expensive to study in Israel and it could also keep students and bring students to the project. British foundations to help raise money would also be helpful.

The name of their electoral list was the **Jaffa list. They wanted to build Jaffa as a multicultural city living in justice and equality.** The list was built from Arab and Jewish activists. They felt that they had not been as successful as they wanted to be yet, as they needed people to carry out these activities and ideas.

They did not specifically see their role as working with Jewish youth, as they had so many more organisations already helping, to empower them, and Palestinian in Jaffa had to build up their youth towards a position of equality.

The Likud party's list slogan was 'it's either us or them'. Other parties said multiculturalism was a disaster. So they knew they were up against a lot of prejudice.

For the Jaffa list to be elected - Palestinians were 2.5 percent of population, but needed 3.3 percent to get anyone in. They did have some enlightened Jewish people supporting them and hoped to get 2 seats including the first Arab woman elected to the council.

Appendix 3: Q & A with the Teachers Union GUPT



Question: *What key difficulties did the union face when campaigning?*

Answer: The most important problem was how to get adequate rights for teachers from the government. And also how to change the thinking of teachers, making them realise their importance in society and also see the importance of trade unions.

Question: *How did the union react when settlers tried to disrupt the working of schools?*

Answer: The Palestinian people had problems every day. We always resist the occupation in our own ways and areas. We have no weapons so we try to resist in civic ways - you'll see the suffering caused by the occupation in Hebron when you visit later in the week. Last week the occupation tried to close a Palestinian school near Ramallah. The education minister went to the school with the GUPT and re-opened it. Another way to resist the attacks on us is by speaking to Trade Unions in the West, and asking you to apply pressure by visiting, writing letters, giving publicity to the situations you observe.

Question: *It was noticeable that you had a large quorum set when getting people to attend the recent meeting we observed. Do you have many problems due to that? Do you need the quorum for each meeting?*

Answer: We needed 50 percent of all members to attend, but actually got 68 percent attendance after your delegation had left the meeting. This is of course the first time GUPT had managed to have direct elections - so there was a bit of a party atmosphere. Last year, GUPT managed to visit more than 95 percent of the schools in Palestine. We aim to talk to everyone to get them to join. For the first time now we have more than 65 percent of eligible teachers joined up. Last year it was 20 percent. The increase is because we visited and guaranteed they would have a part in electing the leadership of their union. The percentage of women is very high. Tulkarm has 1300 teachers, more than 1000 of whom are women. In general we have good relations with the Palestinian Authority.

Question: *How do you pay for everything?*

Answer: It takes a huge budget to carry out our activities - we have good relationships with friends, such as banks, and companies. Fees for individuals to join are about 9 dollars per year - it's the first time teachers have had to pay. Most of this goes directly to the branch but 30 percent goes to the union centrally.

Question: What is the average wage for teachers now?

Answer: It's 800 dollars for new teachers per month. After 10 years, the average is 1,300 dollars. This is about the middle of the average Palestinian wage. 40 thousand people apply each year to be teachers, but only 1000 get in.

Question: Is 800 dollars enough?

Answer: Frankly, No. In Palestine and Israel the prices are the same, but 3000 dollars is the average wage for Israeli teachers. So there are a lot of teachers in Palestine, doing other jobs, like private ones also.

Question: Are there fewer male teachers than female teachers in Palestine?

Answer: Yes, for two reasons. Firstly the salaries are good on average for women, but for men there are greater opportunities to gain more elsewhere. Plus the ministry of Education have a plan to encourage women into Primary schools (the salaries are the same as in other schools). Probably women students are encouraged to be teachers more than men - many of the same issues/ approaches to teaching that happen elsewhere in the world.

Question: What about the teachers for older students?

Answer: There are male teachers for all ages, but there is an increase of women in primaries. This year we have 1200 new teachers, 800 of whom are women, and 400 are men.

Question: What can you tell us about education in Jerusalem and the problems there:

Answer: The occupation government are trying all the time to prevent the Palestinian curriculum being used in Jerusalem. It works in two ways. Firstly stopping the Palestinian curriculum books getting in to Jerusalem. Secondly, the occupation government gives more money and support to private schools NOT to use the Palestinian curriculum. Last week the occupation authorities amended the books, altering pictures, and characters within them. It's a constant battle for our rights and culture.

It is forbidden to build new Palestinian schools, or to repair them. If you compare them with the Israeli schools, you'll find the Israeli ones are modern, with all facilities. Palestinian schools in the occupied territories are not healthy or safe in so many ways. This is part of the policy to undermine these schools. They want only the Israeli narrative taught although Palestinians see Jerusalem as very important, with Al Quds (Jerusalem) as their capital for ever.

In addition to the above, as you know the salaries are unequal between Israeli and Palestinians – the respective minimum wage being 5300 shekels as opposed to the 1300 shekels Palestinian minimum wage. We have a shortage of teachers in Jerusalem plus the occupation prevents teachers coming in. They need a permit if they come from the West Bank and it is often denied.

You should also note that the salaries paid to Palestinian teachers in Jerusalem are a bit higher than in the West Bank due to the higher costs.

There is currently a fight for our rights, to encourage the Palestinian Authorities in Ramallah to increase the money to teachers in Jerusalem to encourage them. It's 1000 dollars in the West Bank but 1600 in Jerusalem.

A problem with residency that we experience daily is that essentially the Israelis want to kick all the Palestinians out of Jerusalem. One example I'll give is that of an older man I know who applied for residency (he was an engineer like myself). He waited a substantial amount

of time - many years without success, but then died. The authorities then said to his children that they had to re-apply.

The permit committees need unanimity between the Israeli parties to give a yes. This never happens.

Question: *What's the union's response to this?*

Answer: We have GUPT members who work as authors writing the curriculum. Also we analyse the curriculum and give opinions on it. For instance in the Arabic curriculum we believed that some of it was inadequate – and this feedback was acted on.

Question: *What's the status of the Hebrew language?*

Answer: Arabic is the language of the curriculum under the Palestinian Authority. However in Jerusalem you have to do a psychometric exam in Hebrew to get to university.

Question: *How many Palestinian universities are there? And how do you get in to them?*

Answer: Anyone in Palestine can apply to go to any Palestine university - but not in Israel. '48' Israelis can go to Palestinian universities however. The test we referred to was for students in Jerusalem, who have a Jerusalem ID.

Question: *Do people want to stay in teaching as they get older?*

Answer: For anyone to apply for a permit to do any work in Israel, you need to be 35 or older and married and have no problems with your kids. You can't even get to Jordan without an Israeli permit, so this causes issues.

Question: *What are the special problems you have in Gaza?*

Answer: There are two major problems. Firstly, schools were destroyed in the last war. Secondly the Israeli authorities don't allow materials in to fix them. Also there are problems within the political system, issues with Hamas. This makes difficulties for the teachers and their salaries too, as the government in Ramallah are paying for the teachers in Gaza, but there is no tax returned.

Plus there is the Israeli blockade which cannot be avoided, plus there's a problem with the electricity – it is only available for four hours per day, which causes big problems. It means students cannot study at night when it's dark. The entrances to Gaza are closed, and people cannot leave. So, life is very complicated in Gaza - inside first plus around the Gaza area. It's like a jail without a roof inside the strip. Previously individuals wanting out could move and breathe through Egypt. But after Sisi's government, all these ways were closed. Currently Gaza teachers ARE being paid but there are issues for the Palestinian Authority getting taxes back from Gaza.

Appendix 4: Q & A with Sabri Sedum, Palestinian Minister for Education



Question: *Are there any projects bringing Palestinian and Israeli children together?*

Answer: In places of conflict it's true that international agents try to bring people together. However, the situation is so complicated here, that the only contact our students have with Israelis is at checkpoints.

Question: *How did you overcome the shutting of the school?*

Answer: It was as I explained to you earlier – peaceful and dignified. A lot of it was aired live over social media. This is a powerful weapon and a good advert for how we are and how we act.

Question: *How do you re-integrate children back into school if they've been detained?*

Answer: We are trying to be innovative with our curriculum, trying to have more interaction with the community – through orchestras and sports and the like. This allows students to vent out their frustrations. Most importantly, this also involves disabled students. There are currently 125 students under house arrest and we have travelling teachers who visit them. Secondly we have established 4 schools in hospitals, plus we are bringing education directly to travelling communities – what we call 'challenge schools' - such as the one shut yesterday.

Question: *The delegation has been interested in the prominence of the teaching of culture etc in Palestinian schools. What can you tell us about that?*

Answer: We have changed our delivery - to one of much more interaction, to try to facilitate deep learning. However, we've not changed the boundaries for Palestinian values on Jerusalem, or on the right of return for instance.

The Israeli authorities say that our schools are terrorist hubs, and schools for incitement. But we continually explain the reality all the time. At one time the United Kingdom Department of Education kept stating told that they our schools were supporting such incitement which puzzled us, but then we discovered the relevant minister Priti Patel had been visiting Israel again and again. We have recently undertaken a comparative study of this question and have printed research where we got Israeli school publications analysed for any bias against the Palestinians – which we believe we have clearly found and can evidence. We

are hopeful the EU will now reverse their position of cutting educational help to Palestine by 5 percent now that we have this robust evidence to back our case.

Question: Are you happy about the amount of funds going into education?

Answer: As you might expect, we believe we should have the cake and eat it all! But the budget allocation has actually increased - it's gone from 15 to 28 percent.

We now have compulsory preschools, so we rely on funds from the private sector and councils to get buildings to set up nurseries. We are lucky to have 5 major donors. Finland, Ireland, Belgium and Germany and Norway.

Question: What happens when parents don't teach co-existence, unlike what is taught in school?

Answer: I think teachers are actually more influential than parents so continue to work on this.

Question: What about teaching methods?

Answer: You may be interested that we'd like to come out of the homework culture. Schools are for academic education, and homes are for social education. Also like elsewhere, we are competing against 'on-line attractions'. We are experimenting and we would like to try to do edutainment to help wean students off this.

Question: What are your current relations with the British government?

Answer: At the moment, it's charged due to the Balfour declaration anniversary issues although Labour Party support is now so much better than previously. We felt that for Teresa May to host an anniversary event for the Balfour declaration, that was something extremely repugnant.

Question: What about European Union support?

Answer: This is one of our major areas of support. The Italians have worked on our preschools for instance. Most important is the political support however – but that is dependent on the composition of the European parliament. In this, it is notable that Germany is going to step in and replace a lot of the money lost through the UNWRA cuts. They have told us their slogan is "When others aim low, we'll aim high"

Appendix. 5: Questions to Defence for Children International



Question: What about the allegation of children being used as human shields?

Answer: The Israeli Army's Public Relations campaign always says that Palestinian mothers are sending kids to the front line etc, to shield shooters. All the media agencies then tended to cover this issue. Another claim that had been made was that Palestinians were using ambulances to transport missiles and UNWRA cars doing this as well. Investigations of this latter claim however showed that it was a trolley not a missile that was being transported in an UNWRA car. Of course the damage had already been done.

Of the 547 children killed reports showed that 5 were killed acting as 'child soldiers'. But CDI acted for all children irrespective of perpetrators so they had drawn up a code for militant groups to sign showing that it was a war crime to do such things. These groups had signed, although some did abuse this. The prevalent image in the media was not related to the real overall situation however.

Question: Who can observe what is happening?

Even under the civil system there was no right to be accompanied by a lawyer, only a family member. It was possible to get international observers in but the judge could still obstruct it using 'privacy for the child'. Less than 1 percent of prisoners were girls. 270 Palestinian boys were currently in prison, and maybe 3 girls. In there had been 450, including 14 girls.

Question: Do we have international comparisons at all in terms of these issues?

When it happened in Egypt some time ago, there had been an outcry. Normally there was criticism by members of the same conventions Israel was in, but this did not lead to meaningful pressure – some people wanted political links with Israel, so they ignored their other obligations. The double standards were all about accountability. There was a culture of impunity that soldiers enjoyed. There has only been one indictment for killing a child, and the sentence was less than the child would have received for throwing a stone.

In a case that had been captured on video, an IDF colonel who had shot dead an unarmed 17 year old stone thrower in 2015 had suffered only a delayed promotion. [21].

Question: What is the situation regarding the funding of DCI, and pressure?

Answer: DCI is at being attacked at the moment. There is a move to legislate to take away funding - supported by a group called 'UK lawyers for Israel' [22]. They are referring to us as a 'terror linked organisation' [23]. They are now trying to approach our donors. They have succeeded in getting Citibank to refuse to handle funds for us. Even MasterCard and Global Giving is now being approached to try to get them not to handle our funds.

21: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-idf-officer-who-killed-stone-throwing-palestinian-tapped-for-top-post-1.6358286>

22: <http://www.uklfi.com>

23: <http://www.uklfi.com/banks-withdraw-services-from-terror-linked-ngo>