

Jerusalem Journal – 31st March

The last seven days have been very hectic for the Jerusalem Ecumenical Accompanier team - I don't have enough space in this little newsletter to tell you half the things we have been doing.

If I rewind to the start of the week we visited 17 year old Fadi Shqerat in his home in Sawahre (East Jerusalem) to hear what had happened to him last month. The following is Fadi's own testimony:

“On the 12th of February I had been leaving school when I saw Israeli Border police chasing other pupils from my school. Not knowing what was happening I decided to hide. However, a soldier must have seen me and pushed me up against a wall. After falling to the ground I found that I had four soldiers around me, and they started to beat me with their guns.”



Fadi Shqerat (17)

Photo credit: John Sharp/EAPPI

Fadi was taken to a police building where an ambulance was called for him. He spent ten days in hospital receiving treatment for the broken leg that he had sustained in the attack by the soldiers. Fadi's father was kept waiting at the police station for an hour and half before he was told that his son had actually been taken to hospital, and he was not permitted to talk to Fadi during the ten days he was in hospital.

Fadi is now back at home recovering from his injuries. The police have accused him of throwing stones at soldiers, something which he strenuously denies, and have placed him under house arrest. The Shqerat family are now planning on taking a legal case against the Israeli Defence Forces for the soldiers' attack on Fadi.

On Thursday (29th) morning we were monitoring Al Ram checkpoint in north East Jerusalem. We have been going to this checkpoint at 7am – which when school children start crossing through. At 7:55am I noticed a soldier with an “attack-dog” start running across the checkpoint and up towards an area with trees, just beside the checkpoint.

John Sharp – Ecumenical Accompanier, EAPPI

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I ran after the soldier and witnessed him releasing his dog in the direction of middle-aged woman and man that were 40 – 50 yards ahead of him. Immediately after he released his dog the soldier also raised his weapon towards the man and woman, as if he was preparing to shoot.

The “attack dog” jumped towards the woman and grabbed hold of her arm, pulling her screaming to the ground. The soldier approached the man and woman still with his gun aimed at them, and then pulled the dog away from the woman. After another soldier had arrived on the scene the middle-aged woman (who was approximately 40 years old) and man were led down to the checkpoint. As I followed them back down to the checkpoint I observed that the woman was limping, possibly from when she had hit the ground, after the dog had jumped at her.



The woman attacked by the army dog (right) is escorted back to Al Ram checkpoint.

Photo credit: John Sharp/EAPPI

The soldiers at the checkpoint prevented me from talking to the woman, who was extremely upset. One person who passed through the checkpoint told me that the woman had requested medical treatment, but I saw no obvious medical treatment being administered to her during the three hours she was held at the checkpoint.

Later on at the same checkpoint we witnessed a young man being stopped not far away from where the middle-aged woman had been attacked earlier by the dog. This time the soldier (a different soldier) simply ran up towards the young man and took hold of him – there was no weapon raised by the soldier or dog used. None of the soldiers responded to my question as to *why* the dog was used to stop the middle-aged woman.

One of the soldiers did come across the checkpoint to speak to me and said, “I don’t agree with using the dogs on people”. It is however very concerning that we have heard of other reports in the last few weeks of “attack-dogs” being used at checkpoints by soldiers.

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