

## ***Jerusalem Journal – 5<sup>th</sup> May 2007***

The new group of Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) have now arrived in Jerusalem and are being prepared for taking over from the current teams. So this week in the Jerusalem team we have been rushing around trying to fit in as much as possible, with our time here now drawing to a close.

On Thursday this week we (myself and a Norwegian EA) travelled up the West Bank to the tiny village of Yanoun with the Israeli organisation Rabbis for Human Rights. Yanoun also happens to be the location of one of the EA teams, and it was nice to link up with the team there for the day.

Our reason for going to Yanoun was to accompany local farmers there who have been trying to plough their land, but have been prevented from doing so, and are often attacked by illegal Israeli settlers who have outposts overlooking the Yanoun (around 400,000 Israelis have settled in the West Bank contrary to International Humanitarian Law).

We accompanied the farmers to their land, and they started ploughing their fields. After only being there around 30 minutes some Israeli army vehicles passed us, shortly followed by a settler's jeep. Shortly afterwards the army vehicles arrived back together with the settler's vehicle. After the soldiers had a conversation with the settler (who was carrying a machine gun) we were approached and told that the area we were in was a "closed military zone" for the day, and therefore we would have to leave immediately or be arrested. This order seemed a little strange, as we knew that Rabbis for Human Rights had checked in the morning with the local Israeli army that it was ok for us to be there. It appeared that it was the settler who was giving the orders to the army, though when asked the soldiers denied this was the case.



*An armed settler with Israeli soldiers*

Photo credit: John Sharp/EAPPI

With the soldiers becoming increasingly angry we realised we would have to move away from the area. It was however very difficult leaving the farmers, who were just trying to get on and work their land. The farmers told us that the settlers would come down and stop them from working as soon as we were away, yet they also thanked us for our brief presence with them as they ploughed.

**John Sharp – Ecumenical Accompanier, EAPPI**

For more information on the Ecumenical Accompanier Programme in Palestine and Israel:  
[www.quaker.org.uk/eappi](http://www.quaker.org.uk/eappi)

Today (Saturday) we accompanied Palestinians and Israelis to the separation barrier around the village of Al-Nu'eman (it should be noted that in 2004 the International Court of Justice advised that Israel's 'separation barrier' is illegal and a violation of International Humanitarian Law).

You may recall from a previous journal entry that the small village of Al-Nu'eman lies south-east of Jerusalem. The village has been cut off from the West Bank by the separation barrier, with the village being left on the Jerusalem side – yet the Israeli government has refused to recognise the village as part of Jerusalem and says the people are living in *their own homes* illegally. Only those living in the village are allowed to enter, meaning families and friends have been cut off.

Around a hundred people (Palestinians, Israeli peace activists, and internationals) reached the separation barrier, and the Palestinians desperately tried to poke their fingers through the fence to make physical contact with family and friends who had gathered on the other side.

Although the gathering (which included at least one woman with a baby) was completely peaceful the Israeli army opted to throw sound grenades at us. Palestinians, Israelis and the international then carried out the symbolic action of throwing bundles of wool and paper-streamers over the metal and barbed wire barrier – colourfully connecting both sides.

After some rushed conversations between people talking through the barrier, including ourselves in the Jerusalem team talking to the Bethlehem team of EAs, we left the barrier under the watch of around 20 soldiers carrying sounds grenades and teargas canisters.



*Palestinians making contact through the separation barrier*

Photo credit: John Sharp/EAPPI

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