

## Three months in Palestine

In February I returned from three months in the Holy Land, on a World Council of Churches programme. Sadly I was there because it is necessary for human rights monitors to be present. Placed in Hebron, I was a member of a 5 person international team, one of six teams in the region. We are neither pro-Palestinian nor pro-Israeli, but seeking to uphold international law and human rights for all people in the region.

Hebron lies in the West Bank, a region that is within Palestine under international law, but which has suffered an illegal military occupation by Israel since 1967. 8,500 Israeli settlers have moved into the city and its surroundings, constructing homes, villages and towns exclusively for Israelis. These are built on Palestinian land taken from the local people, and are heavily guarded by the Israeli military day and night. The current Israeli government has promised to greatly expand such illegal settlements in Palestine.



Amongst the Palestinian households I visited next to settlements, all had experience human rights abuses by Israeli settlers or Israeli military. This man for example is standing by his house, less than an hour after it was illegally and unexpectedly demolished by the Israeli army. The Palestinian family I often give talks about had a son taken from their home by the Israeli army at night. He is now in prison without charge. Though he is 18, this had happened to him twice before as a child, also without charge.

According to the Israeli NGO Military Court Watch (MCW) <https://www.militarycourtwatch.org/> Palestinian children as young as 12 can be put under Israeli military arrest. 20% of the detained Palestinian children MCW interview have been held in solitary confinement. Such acts are against international human rights law (The Convention on

the Rights of the Child, article 37).

Despite that, the Israeli Government say that it is necessary to imprison children in this way for security reasons. The Palestinian Authority does not take Israeli children in this way. The UN observes that 95% of the killings are by Israeli forces of Palestinians, and 5% of the killings are by Palestinians of Israelis <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>

You can read other eyewitness accounts here <https://www.eyewitnessblogs.com/> If any of you know of another group of venue that would like to hear my talk and answer questions based on my experience, please let me know. I would welcome any opportunity.

Bryn Higgs, Altandhu, [brynhiggs@gmail.com](mailto:brynhiggs@gmail.com) or 07958 464373.

*Disclaimer: I was sent by Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) as an Ecumenical Accompanier serving on the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). This account is written in a private and personal capacity and the views contained within it do not necessarily reflect those of QPSW or the World Council of Churches.*