



## Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association

### Abu Dis Human Rights report

### A month in Abu Dis, August 2020

The human rights violations against people in Abu Dis and Palestine continued in August 2020. The pressures on them increased this month not only because of the hot summer (when the appropriation of their water always becomes an issue) or because of Covid, and not even only because of the Occupation and the human rights violations that have become routine.



By now the economic difficulties were biting that resulted from the Palestinian Authority's refusal to go along with the Israeli annexation plans for the West Bank. In June, the PA refused to co-ordinate with Israelis they had been going on since set up by the Oslo Accords 27 years ago. In retaliation and to put pressure on the PA, Israel withheld taxes that should be paid to the Authority, who have now been unable to pay salaries to hundreds of thousands of employees, causing economic hardship across the community.

The Abu Dis Health Centre is under threat as its parent, the Maqassed Hospital in Jerusalem is also uncertain that it can go on as funds have been stopped. Currently both are managing to struggle on but with minimum services and doctors have not been given their salary for the past four months.

People in Abu Dis are trying to get on with their lives in a normal way but their lives are systematically interrupted by movement restrictions, separation from family members, economic and environmental problems. People are becoming accustomed to violence from the Israeli army that every month leaves a number of boys (usually) injured, families, including those with babies, suffering from tear gas, and sees a number of people violently arrested or returned home suffering from their time in jail and their families suffering from fines of thousands of shekels as is shown below.

This month, as is shown below, changes in the 'permission' system compounded health and social problems for many people in Abu Dis and the issue of fines was a pressure on the families of prisoners as well as the imprisonment itself. The Israelis still have not freed the four

Abu Dis prisoners on administrative detention who are held with no trial, still defying the agreement they themselves made to release Ismail Khalaf at the beginning of July. They have not returned the body of Ahmed Eriqat who was killed on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and his family have been leading a campaign for the return of his body so they can bury it.

### **Changes to the procedures for getting ‘permissions’ to go to Jerusalem.**

In the recent past – before Corona – before the stopping of the Israeli co operation with Israel, women over 50 and men over 55 often used to be able to go to Jerusalem without ‘permissions.’ It was a long process; people had to get to the checkpoint, and then had to wait in a long queue and go through the electronic

From women in Abu Dis: (also see other box)

“I have not been able to see my sister for months”,

“I have not been able to see my mother”  
,

“My neighbour was allowed to go to Jerusalem to have her baby, but no one was allowed to go with her or visit her while she was there”

gates. This severe restriction of movement is in itself a violation against the human right to free movement inside your country.

“Last May, I had an appointment with my doctor at the eye hospital in Jerusalem to have a laser surgery. Because of Corona, that appointment was delayed. In the middle of August, they communicated with me and asked me to come on 25<sup>th</sup> to have my surgery. I went to Az-Zaytouna surgery which is about 10 minutes from my house by car, to ask for ‘permission’. When I arrived there, they told me that this service is no longer available, so I had to travel by car about an hour to get to Qalandia. I am over seventy and the long hours of waiting at Qalandia checkpoint in the crowds and with extremely high temperature are difficult. When I arrived and I saw hundreds of people lining up in queues and so close to each other in a small waiting room, I decided that I could not take this risk. I thought I might catch Corona virus or other disease if I stayed with other people in this room, so decided I could not to go for my appointment. In this way thousands of people in Jerusalem area are being denied their right to travel and their right to health care.”

But at the end of June, following the Palestinian Authority refusal to co-ordinate with Israel, Israel made it harder for people to get ‘permission’ to go to Jerusalem. They said that everyone had to have its ‘permission’ to enter Jerusalem. They stopped giving permissions to people based on age, as they had, or giving temporary permissions to people to go and look for work. They also made it even harder, for the people around Abu Dis, as they made it no longer

possible to go 'permission' at the Israeli Civil Department office at the Az Zaytouna terminal and they said that people had to travel to Qalandia to apply for permission. This was a serious difficulty for most people as the road to Qalandia is long and interrupted by checkpoints and bad traffic. Qalandia terminal is already very crowded as this is the way that people from Ramallah and the north have to go into Jerusalem; adding thousands of people from the areas in the east made it even more crowded, and the Israelis gave no regard for social distancing in for the Palestinians in the queue.

## Endless bargaining and impossible choices.

Palestinians' human rights are constantly at stake in a context of endless bargaining. The taxes paid to the Palestinian Authority are being withheld by Israel as a means to push the Authority to return to co-ordination with Israel. Ahmed Eriqat's body has not been returned to his family although he was killed weeks ago and this is presumably in order to be able to bargain with Palestinians (not directly with Ahmed's family) in potential future negotiations (remembering for example the Gilad Shalit deal\*).

Palestinians are also being faced again and again by impossible choices. One is the example of land expropriations: Palestinians are being sent land expropriation orders like the one on the left, which is from Ramallah. These orders are placed on the land with a piece of stone on top to keep them in place. Often these are discovered late. On the paper, it says that the landowner would have around two weeks to protest (with a given deadline). But this is no choice! The landowner is faced with the choice of paying court fees to be told that this is a military decision ... so he cannot take that route.



Another is the example of house demolitions, of which there were many this month. The Israelis tell the house owner who has sunk his savings in building for his family that he has the choice either to take down his house himself, or to pay thousands of shekels for the Israelis to bring their bulldozers and destroy it themselves.

And in prisons, the sentences given to prisoners are the result of plea bargaining. What this means was illustrated starkly this month by the parent of a prisoner in Abu Dis who was told by the lawyer that the choices currently facing them were: to plead guilty and accept a sentence of 14 months and a fine of 4000 shekels, or to plead guilty and accept a sentence of 12 months imprisonment and a fine of 8000 shekels.

Note that families of prisoners are expected to pay for the prisoner's expenses in prison as the Israelis refuse to pay for this. Families in Abu Dis who have a prisoner in Israeli jails typically pay between 2 500 and 3 000 shekels a month for clothing, food and other expenses in jail – This could be much higher if a prisoner is ill and incurs medical costs - in a context where the

average salary is around 3500 shekels a month and the minimum wage is around 1500. If the prisoner does not accept guilt, then the sentence (and his freedom) will be delayed and delayed.

## Across Palestine this month



In August 2020, three Palestinians were shot and killed by the Israeli army. One was a woman from Jenin killed inside her house when shutting the window, holding her baby. One was a boy from Deir Abu Mishaal aged sixteen, and one was a young man from Sawahreh.

This month, 382 people were newly arrested from the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. Fifteen of them were children under the age of 18.

This month a huge number of Palestinian houses or parts of houses under construction were destroyed by Israeli military order: forty (40), mainly in Jerusalem. Like last month, several of these houses were destroyed by their

owners to avoid the high bill of the Israeli army destroying the houses.

This month, there were around 60 Israeli army attacks on the Gaza strip, bombing agricultural land and buildings.

## Settlement expansion

The Israeli gave military orders to confiscate more than 200 donums of Palestinian land on the south side of Nablus. Work continued on building new settlement units, many around Jerusalem, and new roads for settlers. The Israelis are working on a tunnel to connect the Adam settlement near Hizma to Jerusalem.

## In Abu Dis, this month :

**Thursday 6th August** In the afternoon, women led by the family of Ahmed Eriqat, who had been killed on 23rd June, demonstrated in the middle of Abu Dis, calling for the return of his body which is being held by the Israelis. When they got near to the crossroads to the military camp, the Israeli army shot tear gas at them.



**Friday 7th August** There again a demonstration in the late afternoon in Kubsa and at the crossroads to the military camp. According to the Red Crescent, three young people were wounded by live ammunition. They were treated and taken to hospitals.



**Saturday 8th August** In the afternoon, the Israeli army put up a military checkpoint next to Maale Adumim, and stopped Palestinian cars. They arrested one young man Ali Yousef Bader (in his early twenties) and took him Maale Adumim police station and then transferred him to jail.

In the evening, there was army shooting in the town and tear gas in the upper part of town near the military camp.

**Sunday 9th August.** In the middle of the day, the Israeli army put a checkpoint between east Abu Dis and Aizariyeh on the east in the middle of Wad az-Zeitoun street. They

remained there for many hours, stopping cars and checking IDs. As they left the area, they shot tear gas around the valley in all directions.

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August** The Israeli army returned to the same point between east Abu Dis and Aizariyeh in Wad az-Zeitoun street, blocked cars, set up checkpoints, stopped cars and checked IDs. No one knew what they were doing. Again the checkpoint remained for five or six hours.

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August.** There was a demonstration in the town and reports of tear gas and shootings – but no one was recorded as hurt.

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August.** Hussan Halaseh, a young man in his early thirties who came from Sawahreh (next to Abu Dis) was killed by Israeli soldiers in the Old City of Jerusalem. On the same day, his parents and brothers



were arrested (and later released). Reports came that he had been shot and left on the ground bleeding until he died – and in Sawahreh, Abu Dis and surrounding areas there were demonstrations and clashes, and the Israeli army shot live ammunition into the area from the other side of the Separation Wall.



**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> August.** In the morning, the Israeli army and three bulldozers invaded the area of Haie al Salhah, which is part of Jabal al-Mukkaber (a Jerusalem area) on the west of the Separation Wall.

They demolished a six-storey building belonging to the family of Al Jaabees. There were protests and clashes and attempts to stop the building being destroyed but unfortunately the army destroyed it. Some injured young people were taken to hospital.

The Israeli army went into the Maqassed Hospital in Jerusalem and into an operating theatre where one of these young men was undergoing surgery and they arrested him.

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August.** As on many Fridays, there were demonstrations in Abu Dis. The Israeli army shot tear gas and rubber bullets but there was no one hurt today.



**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August.** Early in the morning the Israeli army invaded the house of Saleh Badr. They arrested his son Hassan Badr (18).



**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August** Hassan was taken to court and he was released after the payment of a huge fine. His family paid 14,000 shekels for his release (this is huge – to compare, the average income in Palestine is between 3 and 3,500 shekels a month; the minimum wage is 1,500 shekels).

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August.** The Israeli police put up checkpoints near Maale Adumim on the main road that the Palestinians use, checked cars and issued fines. Inside Abu Dis, there was a demonstration after the midday prayer and the Israeli army shot tear gas and rubber bullets – no reports that anyone was wounded.