LAS PAVAS VICTORY!

In a long-awaited victory for the subsistence farmers of Las Pavas, the Colombian Rural Development Institute (INCODER) published a “definitive decision” on 14 November to expropriate all remaining properties of the estate from oil palm grower Aportes San Isidro. (cont’d page 8)

ABORIGINAL JUSTICE

TEN YEAR BLOCKADE

December 2 marked the tenth anniversary of Grassy Narrows’ Slant Lake blockade, now the longest-running indigenous logging blockade in Canadian history. (cont’d page 6)

TURKISH BOMBING KILLS TWO

About 1:00am on 7 November, Turkish military jets attacked a group of Kurdish civilians, killing two men and wounding two others. The men were transporting goods over the mountains between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan and had stopped to rest when the strike occurred.

CPT-Iraqi Kurdistan team members met with one of the survivors, Rebaz Ahmed Ismail, and his family at a hospital in Sulaimani on 8 November. Rebaz lost one leg in the attack; the other was seriously injured.

Rebaz said that he and his group had been traveling this specific road into Iran for at least three years. He stressed that neither he nor any of his group were armed.

Villagers observed a large number of jet planes flying over the mountain region in the two days prior to the attack.

Apart from two news agencies, no other media and no governmental representatives had met with this survivor of a fatal military attack well within Iraqi Kurdistan’s borders by one of its neighbors. (cont’d page 2)
Turkish cross-border attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan intensified after the U.S. began providing Turkey with intelligence in 2007. After a grassroots campaign by CPT and local partners, civilian casualties ceased for over a year until this strike. CPT urges 1) journalists to heighten their coverage of Turkish attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan and to highlight the resulting civilian casualties; 2) the Sulaimani governorate and Kurdish Regional Government to meet with Rebaz and to support him and other victims of the Turkish cross-border bombings; 3) the Kurdish Regional and the Iraqi Central Governments to pressure Turkey to cease all military action within Iraqi Kurdistan; and 4) the international community to speak out against Turkey’s violations of the human rights of Kurds on both sides of its national boundaries.

Everyone will live in peace and prosperity, enjoying their own grapevines and fig trees, for there will be nothing to fear.
- Micah 4:4

Just over a year ago we first met the children of Sunneh village for the first time. CPT-Iraqi Kurdistan visited them in Gojar IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camp where they had fled with their families during the incessant cross-border shelling of 2011. Their school had been damaged by the attacks. We heard stories of children waking every night with nightmares. Their faces and minds were stressed from life in the tent camp.

On 20 November 2011, UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) organized a commemoration of International Children’s Day at the school, which had been repaired and freshly painted. They wanted the children to know they had not been forgotten. The walls were decorated with balloons, tinsel and dozens of drawings and paintings by the children. Many of the drawings reflected images of the children’s experiences over the preceding months – lots of planes and helicopters dropping bombs onto small villages.

Fast forward to November 2012. CPT-Iraqi Kurdistan has kept in contact with the school. We have shared their stories in the form of a report and a video. Many of the students recognize team members and look forward to our monthly visits.

This past summer their lives were free of bombardment. For an unknown but welcome reason, Iran and Turkey allowed the villagers to live a normal life throughout the entire growing season. Villagers not only planted gardens, but harvested them. Families tended goats and sheep in peace. Children gained another year in age and grew in maturity.

For International Children’s Day, the school was decorated again. The balloons and tinsel were back. So were the artistic talents of the students. Team members, admiring the children’s paintings and drawings, were struck by the difference in images from the previous year. The artwork depicted serene village life: the mountains, the big sky, herds of animals, planting and harvesting, playing and liv-
IRAQI KURDISTAN

ing. Not one showed a bomb. The young students were joyous, dancing and celebrating just being children.

For this moment in time, the children of Sunneh and their parents are able to live under their vine and fig tree without fear. Our prayer is that this scriptural promise will endure.

Kathy Moorhead Thiessen, from Manitoba, Canada, works half time with the Iraqi Kurdistan team.

IN PRAISE OF KURDISH NONVIOLENCE

A five-nation CPT delegation visiting Kurdish areas of Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan 5-17 October learned about nonviolent initiatives from an Iraqi Mullah and interviewed a Kurdish social worker in Turkey facing eighteen years in prison.

From Diyarbakir, Turkey, to Iraqi Kurdistan’s mountain villages and city of Sulaimani, the delegates met with people who have experienced discrimination and oppression just for being Kurdish. Villagers who have endured bombing and shelling by neighboring countries afforded them hospitality. Families told of sons killed allegedly by security forces during the Spring 2011 Kurdish Uprising in Sulaimani. Activists shared about being threatened for speaking out against violence and injustice.

The mayor of rural Sidakan guided the delegation through the construction site of a permanent Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp being built in preparation for future Turkish and Iranian attacks. Reflecting on 2012 when the area was quieter than in previous years, he said it would be ideal if the camps would never have to be used for displaced people. He suggested that a tourist camp or teachers’ housing would be a much better use of the new facility.

The delegates, from Canada, Iraqi Kurdistan, the Netherlands, Sweden and the USA, held two press conferences during their visit – one on 10 October in Sidakan, reporting on the cross-border attacks, and the other on 15 October in Sulaimani.

Their statement at the closing press conference, attended by family members of people killed during the 2011 demonstrations, concluded, “As we leave we will take with us the resilience of villagers who rebuild their houses again and again after being bombed, the bravery of religious leaders trying to bring about peace through nonviolence, and stories of the amazing hospitality Kurdish people have shown us.” They ended the conference by singing, “Dona Nobis Pacem” (“Grant us Peace”).

The delegation’s media statement is available at: http://goo.gl/9djLO. For information on CPT delegations see: http://cpt.org/participate/delegation.

UNTIL ALL ARE FREE
KURDISH SOLIDARITY IN CALIFORNIA
by Sarah Thompson

“Bayani bash!” I tried my few Kurdish words on the group of lively protestors gathered at the CNN building on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, California. “Bayani bash!” one man called back, looking slightly puzzled that a young African-American woman had greeted him in Kurdish.

Luqman Barwani and the Kurdish National Congress of North America had organized a 48-hour-long solidarity hunger strike on 12 November – day 63 of a hunger strike initiated by 700 Kurdish political prisoners in 76 different prisons throughout Turkey. The prisoners, beginning to suffer serious health affects, have been joined by more than 10,000 solidarity hunger strikers.

One of the protesters handed me their statement, which I read aloud: “The Kurdish struggle for equal rights has made historic gains in recent years. Turkey has responded

cont’d page 4
by imprisoning thousands of Kurdish democracy advocates, including elected parliamentarians, mayors, intellectuals, lawyers, journalists, students, and human rights defenders. The Kurdish movement continues to call for a democratic solution to the conflict within Turkey’s territorial borders...The root cause of the hunger strike is the Turkish government’s refusal to accept a negotiated solution to the Kurdish issue and its endeavors to crush any democratic resistance to its unjust policies.”

I had joined a CPT delegation to Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan in October 2012. After returning from the delegation I moved to California and was thrilled to meet active Kurdish people there. For the hour that I joined the hunger-strike I felt like I was back in Kurdistan as I listened to their stories and hopes for the region.

Barwani lives in Thousand Oaks, California which, according to Ventura County orientation materials, is “known to be a great place to raise a family, enjoys award winning schools and is consistently rated among the safest cities in the country.” It seems like Barwani has achieved the American Dream. Why would he spend his time on the street going hungry, sleeping in a tent, and holding banners?

“Because none of us are free until all of us are free,” he told me, “and the world needs to know what is happening to the Kurdish people.”

I shared that part of my work as a CPT delegate is to tell about what I learned and to find creative ways to be in solidarity with the Kurdish struggle for recognition – which is the human struggle for dignity – so that, together, we can build a partnership that transforms violence and oppression.

A young Kurdish-American woman next to me said, “Though you only know a few words in Kurdish, it warmed my heart to hear you say them as you arrived, because, where I am from in Turkey, Kurds are afraid to talk to one another in their mother tongue.” Among the reforms the Kurdish movement seeks are laws that would allow them to use their own language in education and legal defense.

It took a miracle of trust and generosity to get me to the protest. The bike I was riding through the middle of Los Angeles blew a tire three miles from the site. I approached a woman walking her dog to ask if I could borrow something – a car, a bike, anything - and she dug out a small foot-powered scooter for me to use. I normally wouldn’t have had the courage to approach a stranger like that, but experiences of hospitality in places such as Kurdistan encouraged me to take the risk. It worked.

As strangers become friends and we share in one another’s struggles, we scoot closer to the feast of equality and dignity where all are welcome. ☘️

Sarah Thompson served as an at-large member of CPT’s Steering Committee until taking the position of interim Outreach Coordinator. She moved from Indiana to California, USA to help expand CPT’s networks there.
IRAQI KURDISTAN

HUNGER FOR
RIGHTHEOUSNESS
by Bud Courtney

On 23 November, the team received a call from a partner in the Federation of Civil Societies, an organization of Sulaimani NGO’s of which CPT is a member, inviting us to a gathering in front of the Kurdistan Parliament offices. A group of six men with physical disabilities were on the fourth day of a hunger strike. Would CPT come and stand with them for a while?

As we arrived, an ambulance carried two of the men to the hospital to be given intravenous fluids. They had not been eating or drinking anything for days.

We sat in the tent for some time. At one point, my friend from the Federation suggested that I come back the following evening with my guitar.

I arrived the next evening to find the six men, calling themselves the “Disabled Group,” and one of their friends in the tent; no press, no cameras, no fanfare. We sat around the kerosene heater, drank hot banana milk, and played music.

This is why I came to Kurdistan. I know I can’t change the world. But I can show up. I can sit with those who stand, as best they can, for nonviolent change, who invite others to join them in their struggle.

These men, seeking better conditions for the 125,000 disabled in the Kurdish Regional Governorate, vow not to eat until Parliament meets their demands. They will remain camped in front of the Parliament building – building their own community.

They speak very little English, and I speak no Kurdish. Yet, every night I am greeted and made to feel like one of the family. I am always amazed at the hospitality of the people here in the Middle East, perhaps even more so in this tent, by six friends on a hunger strike.

Each day I visit, we sit and laugh and smile and cry and hold each others hands. Each day I ask if they are feeling okay, and if anyone from Parliament has visited them. They say they are fine, but no officials have come yet. The Parliamentarians do not realize what a wondrous gift awaits them within that tent.

CPT Reservist Bud Courtney is part of a Catholic Worker community in New York, USA.

Six hunger strikers camp in front of the Kurdish parliament demanding better conditions for people with disabilities.
TEN YEAR BLOCKADE

The Grassy Narrows community invited CPT to accompany their blockade in 2002 because of potential violence from loggers or police. CPT maintained a presence there until the summer of 2004 and has continued to support the community’s nonviolent struggle for sovereignty.

In late October, the Grassy Narrows’ Women’s Drum Group sent an open invitation to celebrate the 10th anniversary of their logging blockade:

“On 2 December 2002, Grassy Narrows Anishinabe community members mobilized in a powerful direct action to stop the destruction of our way of life and habitat by stopping logging trucks from entering our territory. Many supporters have joined us in this fight. This industrial logging was destroying a way of life for our people as they cut massive areas of our forest against our will and carried our trees off to the mills since the early 1950s...

...Since December 2002, our community has taken on this big logging industry. We succeeded in kicking out the world’s largest paper company – Abitibi – and we are still fighting against other companies like Weyerhaeuser, which are trying to regain access to our forest. We will continue to fight against this cultural genocide. Please join us in celebrating our resistance, our sovereignty, and our action in defense of the earth.”

(continued from page 1)

CPT’s Aboriginal Justice Team (AJT), in coalition with Environmental Justice Action in Toronto and other friends of Grassy Narrows across Turtle Island (North America), took attentive notice of this invitation and started planning multiple celebrations across the continent.

AJT organized a Sacred Fire and Feast in front of the Ontario Legislature at Queen’s Park in Toronto on 2 December. During that same week, 25 other towns and cities across Turtle Island held screenings of the film, “As Long As the Rivers Flow: The Grassy Narrows Blockade Story,” many of them organized by CPT members or former delegates.

Through ten years of fighting to protect the land and organizing for self-determination, the Grassy Narrows community has gained:

- continent-wide recognition of the fairness of their struggle through education and public actions;
- scientific support for their position on mercury poisoning and detrimental logging practices;
- an Ontario Court of Justice ruling that the Ministry of Natural Resources and logging companies must respect Grassy Narrows trap lines (which in practice recognizes their traditional territory).

Most importantly, the community is recovering their way of life with initiatives like the Women’s Drum Group, the Children Drum’s Group, the Trapper’s Center and the Wild Rice project. All this work has made Grassy Narrows one of the most inspiring initiatives in Turtle Island!

It reminds us why we keep doing what we do – because we believe that another world is possible, an earth where a diverse collection of communities and viewpoints live together in peace and social justice.

Join a CPT delegation to Grassy Narrows and hear their story first-hand (http://goo.gl/MkWRb).
ABORIGINAL JUSTICE

BEHIND THE PINES
by Julián Gutiérrez Castaño

Have you seen a story,
Touched a memory,
Smelled the pain,
Read an old face.
Felt the same old wind,
That they did,
And noticed that your whole being is drowning?
Near the round lake,
Where they had to run every day,
Behind the pines
Where I could not go
And you cannot see,
There is a cemetery.
Keep a minute of silence
For the kids that were forced
Into Residential Schools.

Julián Gutiérrez Castaño from Risaralda, Colombia serves full time with CPT's Aboriginal Justice Team.

WATERSHED EXPEDITION

The Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) First Nation has been particularly proactive and creative in asserting their community’s rights.

Through their groundbreaking Water Declaration, KI defines their protection of Big Trout Lake and its 13,025 square km watershed.

Their Consultation Protocol sets the conditions for mining companies to work with the community on extraction projects.

This autumn, community members undertook a 350 km canoe trip through their traditional territory, following a trading route used by their ancestors and visiting historic sites along the way.

Recently, two youth from the community created a video called “Learning to Run the Rapids.” While having boatloads of fun, their educational efforts also help to protect the watershed.

Through activities like this, KI members demonstrate and publicize their continued presence on the land and their dedication to protect it as part of their indigenous identity and cultural expression.

See stunning images from the Expedition Photo Gallery at http://goo.gl/EjVQS.

For more information about the KI’s struggle to protect their lands see www.KILands.org.

CPTers serving the Aboriginal Justice team October-December 2012 were: Emily Green – student intern (Ontario, Canada), Julián Gutiérrez (Risaralda, Colombia), Peter Haresnape (Cambridgeshire, England), Rebecca Johnson (Ontario, Canada), Chris Sabas (Iranian national & naturalized U.S. citizen living in New York, USA).

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According to INCORDER, with the land now under government control, the case can finally “proceed to material recuperation and titling in favor of the rural population.” Plots expropriated earlier this fall, primarily waterways and wetlands, should never have been allowed to be held privately, the agency ruled.

The Buenos Aires Farmers Association (ASOCAB) – the organization to which 116 families from Las Pavas belong – celebrated the news by thanking God, supporting churches and organizations, and responsible government agencies.

While praising the decision, the families also called for its orderly fulfillment amidst ongoing threats. In recent months, Aportes San Isidro has stepped up intimidation tactics against ASOCAB farmers and has threatened retaliation because of INCORDER’s decision.

How and when Colombian authorities will implement the ruling remains to be seen. Aportes San Isidro and its large oil palm extensions continue to operate in portions of Las Pavas, while ASOCAB members cultivate other portions.

The violence and oppression faced by ASOCAB members in Las Pavas are emblematic of the problems of land-grabbing and forcible displacement in the context of Colombia’s decades-long armed conflict. The community’s persistent, faithful, nonviolent response to a catalog of wrongs has enabled Las Pavas to become a high-profile test case for land reform.

Since Juan Manuel Santos was elected President in 2010, some 27,000 land claims have been registered with the government. The effectiveness of the nation’s land restitution efforts will have a significant impact on prospects for peace. It may also shape ongoing talks between the Colombian government and FARC guerrillas.

ASOCAB members have “hope that the journey ahead will be positive, and that we may finally obtain what we have called the Miracle of Las Pavas.”

**ASOCAB Statement (excerpts)**

We offer our thanks to God, in whom we have believed...and to all who have contributed to making the truth of our case known to the world. Today we received a decision that responds to that truth.

...We have waited so long. It has been six years since we started this legal process, and a lifetime of resisting all kinds of abuses – forced displacement, illegal evictions, proxy attacks, damage to our crops, contamination and drainage of nearby wetlands, stigmatization for defending our rights, persecution of our leaders, direct and indirect death threats, physical assaults, killing of our livestock, destruction of our homes and shelters, closure of our roadways, preventing access to our work and freedom of movement, creation of parallel organizations to destroy our social fabric and countless other aggressions – all in an attempt to deny our rights. Yet we have withstood it all because we are a community of great faith and hope.
made up of struggling, humble, simple, honest people committed to the common welfare who believe that there is no evil that lasts a hundred years.

…We are very pleased and satisfied with INCODER’s historic decision. We see it as reflecting the justice previously denied us, and as an opportunity for the prompt restitution of lands to which we have rights and from which we have earned our livelihoods and sustained our families for many years.

…We call on the national and international community and all state agencies to uphold the decision of INCODER and to assure that the rights acquired by our community are respected.

…Once again we give thanks to God and ask God to grant wisdom to the institutions that protect the rights of the people, especially the farmers like us who have been harmed the most, since that is what will contribute to the peace we Colombians so desperately need.

Buenos Aires, El Peñón
Southern Bolívar province, Colombia
November 16, 2012

CPTers serving the Colombia team October-December 2012 were: Eddy Ewert – intern (Wienhausen, Germany), Ramyar Hassani – intern (Sanandaj, Iran), Drew Herbert (California, USA), Caldwell Manners (Meghalaya, India), Sandra Milena Rincón (Colombia), Amanda Robinson – intern (Colorado, USA), Jenny Rodriguez (Colombia), Pierre Shantz (Colombia), Sarah Sommers – intern (Ohio, USA), Stewart Vriesinga (Ontario, Canada).

RAISING CHANGE

The victory of the Las Pavas community shows again what following Jesus’ way of liberating love and creative nonviolence can do. This community’s incredible commitment and courage embody the spirit of grassroots struggle that has animated CPT’s work for 26 years.

Your help makes it possible for us to continue the work of building partnerships to transform violence and oppression. Supporters responded to our September appeal in the USA with 242 donations totaling $30,644 which matched the challenge of a generous donor who made an additional gift of $10,000. Thank you!

We are experimenting with a new opportunity to stretch your generous donations even further. An online giving platform called Crowdrise lets you join our fundraising team. You get your own personal page and tools for reaching out to your networks to spread the word about CPT’s work in Colombia, Iraq, Palestine and Canada. Or simply donate.

Between now and 10 January, Crowdrise is offering a $50,000 grant to the organization that raises the most money; $30,000 for second place and $20,000 for third. We believe that, with CPT’s world-wide network of peacemaker supporters, we have a real chance to meet this goal. We need both donors and team members for that to happen.

The whole Colombia team has taken the lead by setting up personal pages for each member. They’ve already won a matching grant of $500 on Crowdrise with their amazing fundraising work.

Please visit www.cpt.org/crowd for simple instructions on how to join us.

If you can’t do Crowdrise, we still need your support. You can use the enclosed envelope to send us a check. If everyone who receives this newsletter gives $3 (the cost of a cup of coffee for many readers), we’ll have enough money ($45,000) to support three full-time peacemakers in the field for 2013.

With wishes for a safe and meaningful holiday, we thank you for being part of the “T” in Christian Peacemaker Teams.
OH, FREEDOM!

CPT-Colombia joined one of its partner organizations, CAHUCOPANA*, in celebrating the 1 November release of Claudia María Mayorga from eight months in prison.

This mother, grandmother, friend and peace builder was found innocent of sedition (rebellion) charges filed earlier this year. Her arrest is an example of the many injustices perpetrated against Colombian human rights workers on a daily basis, often with no public visibility.

CAHUCOPANA and other organizations assert that the detention of Mayorga and community leaders like her is part of the Colombian government’s strategy of repression against grassroots peace processes and human rights organizations that denounce continuing violations.

“We honor the good name of this woman who has dedicated her life to peace through concrete action in a land where violence was sown,” said Colombia CPTers. “Claudia Mayorga is committed to building a country of justice, peace and love and we thank God that justice has come for Claudia in time to be with the people she loves at Christmas.”

CPT accompanies Claudia Mayorga’s son, Carlos Morales, an educator and organizer for CAHUCOPANA.

*CAHUCOPANA is a human rights organization of small farmers from the rural

UNICEF Ambassador Visits Hebron

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Goodwill Ambassador, Agnes Chan, visited the old city of Hebron and the CPT office on 6 November, together with a UNICEF delegation, to see first-hand effects of the occupation on children and their education. The delegation also wanted to verify how money donated by UNICEF was being put to work in the area.

Chan thanked CPT and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Project in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) for their work in Hebron, ensuring that children can access school with more dignity.

“EAPPI and CPT act as a check-point,” she said, holding soldiers accountable to their mandate, deterring abuses and documenting those that occur for the world to see.

Chan spoke with many children who described daily bag searches and detentions as well as soldiers carrying out practice routines, pretending to shoot as the children walk to school.

Seeing flowers that Palestinians had planted at their homes near checkpoint 56 to keep beauty around them and maintain pride in the face of great hardship nearly brought her to tears.

CPT thanked Chan for her visit and for UNICEF’s support of the Hebron team’s work.
NOT ANOTHER SETTLEMENT!

Israeli settlers moving into a house in Hebron means bad news for neighboring Palestinians. Past experience shows that settler violence increases. Security measures implemented by Israeli authorities to protect the settlers are harsh. More detentions. More harassment. More restrictions on movement for Palestinians – closing roads to vehicles, closing shops, and even closing pedestrian routes forcing much longer journeys to work and school.

Such was the case when Israeli settlers illegally occupied the vacant Palestinian-owned Al-Rajabi building in Hebron in March 2007. This four-story multi-unit building is strategically located to link the large settlement of Kiryat Arba (about 7000 residents) to smaller settler enclaves inside Hebron’s Old City.

Israeli police eventually evicted the settlers in December 2008 after the Israeli High Court ruled that some of the papers claiming settler ownership of the property were fraudulent.

However, the Al-Rajabi case is back in court and Palestinians in the neighborhood are very worried.

In September, despite the High Court’s 2008 decision and the fact that all Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law, a Jerusalem Magistrate’s Court granted ownership of the building to the settlers, clearing the way for them to move back in.

An October injunction put a hold on that ruling, but fears are growing that the current legal process will be unduly influenced by politics leading up to an early election and consolidation of conservative leadership in Israel.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), settler violence against Palestinians “is not random criminal activity; in most cases, it is ideology-driven, organized violence, the goal of which is to assert settler dominance over an area.”

CPT recently interviewed a number of families who live near the Al-Rajabi building and Kiryat Arba settlement. All of them reported numerous experiences of harassment and violence from settlers living in the area. They expressed fear of this violence increasing if settlers are allowed to reoccupy the Al-Rajabi building.

One Palestinian mother said, “During that time [2007-2008], settlers were violent towards us and our children. They burned houses and tried to break into our home. I’m extremely nervous because the girls must walk past the Al-Rajabi building in order to get to school.”

CPT is working closely with, the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC) and others to stop settlers from re-occupying the Al-Rajabi building.

(continued page 12)
Palestinian families who lived through the 2007-2008 settler occupation are asking for your help: “We are pleading to all those who will listen to stop this. If settlers come back again we will face the same issues again. That time was very stressful for us. It put a strain on our family relations.”

**URGENT ACTION:**
Please contact the government officials listed below to prevent another new settlement in Hebron.

**Sample text for message:**

Dear ____,

The international community is gravely concerned about the decision to allow settlers to reoccupy the Al-Rajabi building in Hebron, West Bank. In 2007 and 2008, when settlers last occupied this house, settler violence and harassment of Palestinians in the area increased.

The four small settlements already inside Hebron have caused immense physical, social and economic suffering for local Palestinian residents. Another settlement would not only violate article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, but would cause greater suffering and would work against the roadmap towards peace.

Please urge Israeli authorities to prevent the formation of a new Israeli settlement in Hebron’s Al-Rajabi Building.

Sincerely,

**Please Contact:**

- your Ambassador and/or Consul General in Israel (http://goo.gl/6Shig)
- the Israeli Ambassador in your country (http://goo.gl/uDYdN)
- Israeli Minister of Defense, Ehud Barak, Fax: +972.3.691.6940, +972.3.696.2757; e-mail: minister@mod.gov.il
- your member of parliament or congress
  - UK - http://goo.gl/ZEmDc;
  - Canada - http://goo.gl/HWr11
  - USA - http://goo.gl/DHLGo

**AN UNHOLY DAY**

On Sundays back home, I sleep in, have a leisurely breakfast and take a beautiful, ten-minute walk along the lake shore to my local church. A heron perched on a rock often peers at me as I go by. Then I walk through a wonderful field of bluebells, or daffodils, depending on the season. As I walk the rocky path up through the fields, I hear the bell toll and pass through a kissing gate before I enter through the grand church doors where the welcomer greets me with a handshake. Then I go and find my place on a pew. After the service the congregation gathers for coffee and biscuits. This ritual helps me keep my holy day of rest and prayer and reminds me of God’s goodness.

Friday is the Muslim holy day. In Hebron, the main prayer is around 11:30am at the beautiful Ibrahim Mosque. The call to prayer is as holy as...
the tolling bells in my home church. The journey these worshipers go through every week however is very different from mine.

First of all, worshipers must pass through a checkpoint with a turnstile at both ends and a metal detector in the middle. Men, young and old, must take out keys and money from their pockets and remove their belts to go through. Women often have their bags searched. It is not unusual for the Israeli military to let only one person through at a time. The queue then stretches for blocks. People can wait for over an hour.

Even after getting through the checkpoint, the border police can call you over, body search you again and take your ID. Armed soldiers and border police are everywhere. They often point their weapons directly at people, including women and children.

After the first checkpoint with bag and body searches, worshipers must pass through yet another checkpoint and metal detector.

After prayers, worshipers leaving the mosque must wait in line again as Israeli soldiers return their IDs one by one.

Can you imagine being subjected to this tiresome, degrading ordeal every week to be able to worship? Why do Muslim worshipers in Hebron have to go through all of this on their holy day? Because in this land, the victims are the ones to be punished.

In 1994, Israeli Baruch Goldstein entered this mosque and opened fire killing 29 Muslims at prayer. Israeli authorities then closed the mosque for several months. When it reopened, it was divided into two parts, a synagogue and a mosque.

There are no checkpoints on the synagogue side. There is a metal detector; however, CPTers often observe Jewish settlers walking down Worshipers Way, the road to the synagogue, with guns across their shoulders. The guns remain with them as they enter the synagogue gardens.

After such a massacre, this double standard treatment seems terrifyingly unfair, and utterly unholy.

Twelve CPTers and from Canada, England, Germany, Palestine, Philippines, Sweden and the USA served the Palestine team October-December 2012. Thirteen delegation members 22 October – 4 November came from Brazil and the USA. Five delegation members 19 November – 4 December came from Canada and the USA. Names withheld due to the State of Israel’s policy of denying entry to many peacemakers.
HUMANE BORDERS

by John Heid

They shall not hunger or thirst, nor the scorching wind or the sun strike them; for one who has compassion for them leads and guides them beside springs of water.
- Isaiah 49:10

On the weekend before Advent, I joined volunteers from Humane Borders, a Tucson, Arizona-based humanitarian group, on their annual service trip to the U.S.-Mexico border. Humane Borders places water stations in the Sonoran Desert borderlands to aid people crossing the hazardous, remote terrain. Brilliant blue flags hoisted above these water drops prominently mark each site.

The annual U.S. Thanksgiving weekend project focuses on an area where 14 Mexican workers died of dehydration in May 2001, as chronicled by Luis Alberto Urrea in “The Devil’s Highway.” The landscape is austere. No fences. No power lines. No buildings. No evidence of human habitation beyond scattered artifacts of the ancient Hohokum civilization, spent shells from the nearby Barry Goldwater Bombing Range, a petroglyph site, and a couple flyovers by Border Patrol helicopters.

The sky was seamless blue as we waded for miles through seas of waist-high creosote bushes and cholla cacti. Occasionally a jackrabbit darted by us. Lizards outnumbered birds. Temperatures this time of year range from 40s F at night to 90s F in midday. Surrounding mountains create a soup bowl effect to the terrain. In the hours we walked, the distant peaks seemed to keep moving further away from us.

Over the course of three days, five of us replaced the tattered, sun-bleached blue flags of seven water tanks and checked the structural status of each site.

between 2004 and 2007, CPT’s Borderlands project partnered with local groups along the US-Mexico border to reduce the number of migrant deaths in the desert, advocate for just and comprehensive U.S. immigration reform, and call for compassionate treatment of immigrants. Although CPT no longer maintains a full-time team there, CPT Reservists, including John Heid, continue to support the work of local groups.
Each Wednesday, CPT publishes Prayers for Peacemakers, brief prayer requests based on our project work in Canada, Colombia, Iraqi Kurdistan and Palestine.

We recently asked recipients of Prayers for Peacemakers for feedback. Here are just a few of the responses.

I am always glad to see [the prayers]. I know they will be short, to the point, and always something I want to pray for. I never feel manipulated or have reservations.

Christine Reichman
Alaska, USA

I appreciate the short, weekly format. I generally read the request and take time for prayer right then and there at my computer.

Robin Buyers
Ontario, Canada

I love how short they are. I rarely make excuses for procrastinating over the prayer. I will pray straight away. Other longer e-mails tend to get put off until later.

Matt Manchester
internet

The format is great. Succinct but clear.

Rosemarie Milazzo
New York, USA

Just the right length for church bulletin announcements!

Edgar Rogalski
Ontario, Canada

To bring a Peace, Pies & Prophets show to your community, contact Megan at Ted & Company TheaterWorks; email: office@tedandcompany.com; phone: 540-560-3973.

Signs of the Times is produced up to four times a year. Batches of ten or more are available to institutions, congregations, and local groups for distribution. Any part of Signs of the Times may be used without permission. Please send CPT a copy of the reprint. Your contributions finance CPT ministries including the distribution of 15,000 copies of Signs of the Times. The work of CPT is guided by a 12-member Steering Committee. CPT's Peacemaker Corps includes 32 stipended workers and 150 Reservists living in five Canadian provinces, four Colombian departments, Czech Republic, Egypt, England, Germany, India, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Palestine, Philippines, Scotland, Sweden, Taiwan, Wales and 30 U.S. states plus the District of Columbia.
KEY EVENTS 2013
See www.cpt.org for more information

Peacemaker Delegations
• Aboriginal Justice: 3-13 May; 9–19 August; 27 September – 7 October
• Colombia: International: 30 May – 12 June; 17–30 July; 19 September – 2 October
  National (for Colombians): 23–30 March
• Iraqi Kurdistan: 25 May – 8 June (German Language only); 14–28 September
• Palestine/Israel: 25–18 March; 21 May – 8 June; 13–26 August; October & November 2013 dates to be announced

Peacemaker Trainings
• January: 4 January – 4 February 2013; Chicago, Illinois, USA (apply by 15 October, 2012)
• July/August: 12 July – 12 August 2013; Chicago, Illinois, USA (apply by 1 May 2013)

Steering Committee Meetings
• 16–20 April; Toronto, Ontario
• 15–19 October; Conference Call

South Hebron Hills – On 6 December, the Israeli military demolished the mosque in the village of Um Fagarah at the request of Israeli settlers from an illegal settlement outpost nearby. The mosque had also served as the community’s school.

Two days later, one hundred international and Israeli peace activists marched from at-Tuwani to Um Fagarah to show support for the villagers. Under the watchful eye of Israeli soldiers and police, the group gathered around the rubble in prayerful witness to the demolition of what was a place of worship and education.

Christian Peacemaker Teams is a program of active peacemaking sponsored by Church of the Brethren/On Earth Peace, Friends United Meeting, Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Church USA, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Congregation of St. Basil (the Basilians), Every Church a Peace Church, and Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.