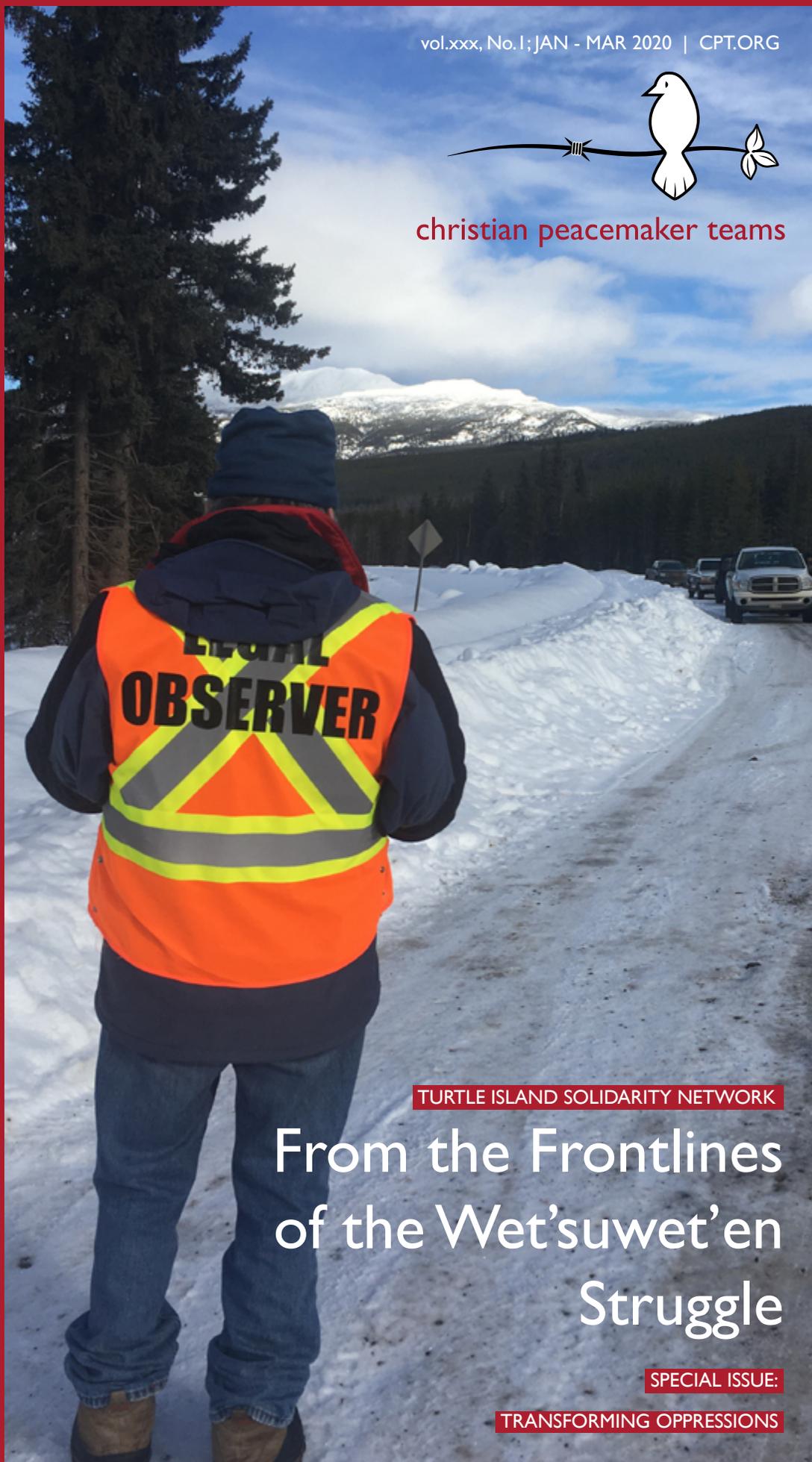


christian peacemaker teams



TURTLE ISLAND SOLIDARITY NETWORK

# From the Frontlines of the Wet'suwet'en Struggle

SPECIAL ISSUE:

TRANSFORMING OPPRESSIONS

# Letter from the editor

Dear CPT Community,

As I write this, our teams in Palestine, Colombia, Iraqi Kurdistan and Lesvos have either closed down temporarily, or have shifted to the digital-only realm. Till it is deemed safe to return to the routine of daily life, teams will be unable to respond to the needs of our partners in the usual way. How will the COVID-19 pandemic affect our partners? Just because the world is entering 'Social distancing,' does the violence stop? These are questions that only time can answer. But what we know for sure, is that the spear of oppression will only dig in deeper. For small farmers in Colombia who have always been abandoned by the state, what can they expect?

What this virus has been able to do, is what the work of undoing oppressions attempts to do: pull back the curtain, and reveal to the world the structures of violence, hatred and oppression, directed at the most vulnerable among us. Maybe today, we will see what living in Gaza is like - 14 years of quarantine, a.k.a. "Open Air Prison." Maybe it'll take us as long as COVID-19 is around to understand. Or maybe sooner.

What does naming, challenging and transforming the violence and oppression that our partners are subject to look like? In this issue, we invite you into conversations, often had on teams around the daily work of transforming oppression. We would also love to hear back from you on how you are challenging these structures that dehumanize us all.

The virus' revelation of the vulnerabilities of the system may be a gift to us - an evolutionary jump so to speak. Maybe we'll jump to that point in history where together we'll have to build a system that is fair and just, because the old system worked for only a few.

*Cover Image: CPTer Chuck Wright monitors the activity of Canadian police at Gidimt'en camp, Wet'suwet'en territory.*

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The World Has Changed:

Wake up & smell  
The possibility.  
The world  
Has changed:  
It did not  
Change  
Without  
Your prayers  
Without  
Your faith  
Without  
Your determination  
To  
Believe  
In liberation  
&  
Kindness;  
Without  
Your  
Dancing  
Through the years  
That  
Had  
No  
Beat.

An excerpt from *The World Has Changed* by Alice Walker.

In Kindness,  
Caldwell Manners



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# Respect the Demands of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Leaders & Land Defenders

## Statement of Solidarity

January 15, 2020



Christian Peacemaker Teams stands with the Wet'suwet'en land defenders and all Indigenous people protecting their rights and the environmental integrity of their homelands. CPT is deeply concerned with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's maneuvers this week to establish an "Exclusion Zone" on Wet'suwet'en territory— barring media and clan members from entering— which effectively reinstates a colonial and an apartheid era pass system.

In the Exclusion Zone, located in the unceded territory of the Wet'suwet'en nation in northern British Columbia, the RCMP are enforcing a court injunction on behalf of a natural gas pipeline development. This injunction violates Wet'suwet'en law, the right to free, prior, and informed consent, and ignores the international condemnation by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to immediately suspend work on the Coastal GasLink pipeline until consent is obtained. Also concerning is the RCMP's demonstrated willingness a year ago to use lethal force to enforce this injunction during a militarized raid on the Gimid'ten checkpoint.

While the Coastal GasLink, RCMP and BC government may point to employment benefits and agreements with Wet'suwet'en band councils, Coastal GasLink does not have the consent of the hereditary clan leaders of their traditional territory. In accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (principles the BC and Canadian governments have promised to uphold), prior consent needs to be obtained before any work can continue. As such, we echo the demands of all five Wet'suwet'en Clan Chiefs for:

1. Coastal GasLink needs to vacate the territory of the Wet'suwet'en.
2. The Canadian and British Columbia governments must uphold its commitment to implement the Declaration.
3. The RCMP must respect the rights of the hereditary chiefs and refrain from interfering with Wet'suwet'en law.

As a nonviolent accompaniment organization, we have witnessed the threats and use of violent force against Indigenous peoples defending their rights from Burnt Church, to Elsipogtog, to Barriere Lake, to Caledonia, to Grassy Narrows. History is repeating itself in unceded Wet'suwet'en territory, an illustration of Canada's ongoing settler colonial project that dispossesses Indigenous people from their land for settler industry and capital gains.

The actions of RCMP, Coastal GasLink, and BC government make the rhetoric of reconciliation ring hollow. CPT is closely monitoring the events in Wet'suwet'en territory, and will continue to advocate to ensure Indigenous rights are upheld here and elsewhere across Turtle Island.

# State Violence and Diverse Bodies

BY CPT IRAQI KURDISTAN



Christian Peacemaker Teams is committed to resisting and transforming oppression, including systems of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and colonialism. One system of oppression that CPT does not often analyse is the oppression of ableism—the oppression of people with disabilities. Children and adults with disabilities experience ableism when systems of power deny them education, employment, freedom of movement, and the ability to participate in society. Members of this community are also more likely to experience violence than the general population.

People with disabilities often experience oppression and pity for what they are not able to do. But the problem is not disability. The problem is that the structures and systems that society continues to create are not accessible to everyone. Bodies hold incredible diversity, and this includes diversity in ability. Every body and ability should be celebrated.

For thirty years, the states of Turkey and Iran have conducted cross-border bombings against families living in Iraqi Kurdistan. The

bombings happen almost every day, decimating Kurdish homes, land, and life. Violence conducted by these states has inflicted disability on many of our partners in Iraqi Kurdistan.

CPT Iraqi Kurdistan (CPT-IK) has recently launched a campaign in collaboration with partners affected by these bombings, called “Hear Us Now: Stop the Bombing!” The campaign seeks to raise awareness and to gather support for the people affected. One of the families engaged in this campaign is the family of Zeitun Qadir, who was killed in an Iranian shelling on July 10, 2019. Zeitun and her two brothers Ali and Sirwan were working in their farmland tilling crops in the Barbezín area, an hour away from the family’s home. As they were working, the Iranian military bombed the land for one hour where the family lives. Zeitun was 18 years old when she was killed. Her two brothers remain wounded from the bombing. Ali now lives with permanent disabilities.

After the bombing, neighbours rushed Ali to a hospital, where doctors retrieved 16 pieces



of shrapnel from his body. He lost one eye and sustained severe injuries to his feet and one of his legs. He cannot walk and his family has spent five years worth of their current income on his surgeries. Ali still needs further treatment, but his family lacks the resources.

Ali's father, Kak Qadir, fears the ableism Ali will now experience. Kak Qadir told CPT-IK, "There is no future for him in this country. He won't be able to find work with his injuries."

People with disabilities in Iraqi Kurdistan have little access to employment as the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) does not guarantee employment, and private employers have no interest in hiring people with disabilities. Since the financial crisis of 2014, the KRG has declared it will not recognize anyone who has a disability. No persons with disabilities have received assistance and income from the government since the declaration was mandated six years ago. Ultimately, Ali experiences the oppression of ableism as he receives no employment, no income, and no recognition under government law as a person with a dis-

ability.

CPT-IK recently connected Ali and his family with Kak Kawa Mohammed, a member of the Iraqi Parliament, with the hope that the Iraqi State and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) can compensate the family for the violence they experienced. The team hopes Ali and his family receive recognition by these governments as victims of state violence, as well as recognition for Ali as a person with disabilities, so he may receive the full guarantee of his human rights.

CPT-IK works to transform the cross-border bombings our partners experience with a commitment to transforming oppression that intersects with this state violence, including the oppression of ableism. Disability is a quality of human diversity, and we lament the ways states create disability with acts of war. We affirm all bodies, and we grieve how state violence assaults bodies. As we affirm and grieve, we work to transform the oppression of state violence and ableism that people in Iraqi Kurdistan experience. ■



A welcome/warming centre at Gidimt'en camp at the 27-kilometre mark of Morice West Forest Service Rd.  
Photo: Natalie Maxson.

# From the Frontlines of the Wet'swet'en Struggle

BY NATALIE MAXSON

It was dark when we arrived at the Gidimt'en camp outside Houston, B.C., with a trunk full of groceries and winter camping gear for everyone to share. Chuck Wright and I made the twelve-hour road trip on behalf of CPT to the site at the 27-kilometre mark along Morice West Forest Service Road in response to an invitation from Wet'suwet'en leaders for legal observers. It was evening in early February,

and the camp was lit with the glow of a bonfire. The sound of people chopping firewood filled the air.

"This is bush life," said one person while we were being oriented to the camp.

"Where do you get your drinking water from?" I asked thirstily.

"The river gives good water," said one supporter. I hesitantly dipped my bottle into the

Wedzin Kwa (Deep River) -- a point of contention between land defenders and Coastal GasLink (CGL), the company behind the disputed natural-gas pipeline. The water was pristine and refreshing, a far cry from what First Nations under boil-water advisories experience every day.

Walking into the woods that first night to reach the outhouse, I stopped in my tracks. I had the distinct feeling I was being watched. I knew the RCMP checkpoint was only one kilometre away. But this visceral feeling of being watched was different and very close. I stopped on the snowy path, my gaze directed toward the trees, and I introduced myself. I declared my intentions for being in the territory: to monitor and document police behaviour, and to do no harm. There is a presence here. This land is sacred. During our week-long stay, moments of prayer and ceremony highlighted our time at Gidimt'en camp.

On the first day at the camp, I noticed red dresses hung up along the road. The red dresses are reminders of the women and girls who have been killed or gone missing on the nearby "Highway of Tears" and express distress over the risk the CGL worker camp poses to women in this community. The 2019 report of the national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls states that there is substantial evidence that links resource extraction projects with violence against Indigenous women and girls especially where worker camps or "man camps" are established.

Being on this beautiful land and meeting the people on the frontlines has transformed my engagement from one of intellectual knowledge to a deeper spiritual and physical understanding. It's one thing to read about the region: I was inspired by the landmark Delgamuukw court case, which found that Aboriginal land rights in the area had never been extinguished by Canadian occupation and hereditary chiefs continue to have title over their traditional territory (I first read this in 1998 as a university student). But it's another to hear first-hand stories from people about what this territory means to them. In conversation with hereditary Chief Namoks during our stay, I learned that the camps set up and occupied along the Morice Forest Service road are historic village sites. He added that the proper archaeological assessments have not been done in the areas where CGL is scheduled to work. That same week he had been in talks with CGL and provincial government representatives and reflected, "We always suspected who was calling

the shots, but these meetings were the first time I actually saw industry directing government officials what to do."

I met a nine week old baby with big, bright eyes who smiled when I said, "What do you think of all this? All this is for you and the children to come." I later witnessed an elder confront the RCMP officers at the checkpoint that restricted people's access to the territory state: "We're not doing this for us. We're defending the land for the children to come. Not just First Nations children, all children."

During our time at the camp, we witnessed the overwhelming presence of heavily armed police, tactical units, helicopters and drones to defend an injunction passed to protect Coastal GasLink's pipeline project. We witnessed RCMP restrict and detain media reporting on the situation in the territory. Chuck and I were arrested on February 8 along with several others when the RCMP expanded their "exclusion zone" in the area, and were held in police custody for over two days.

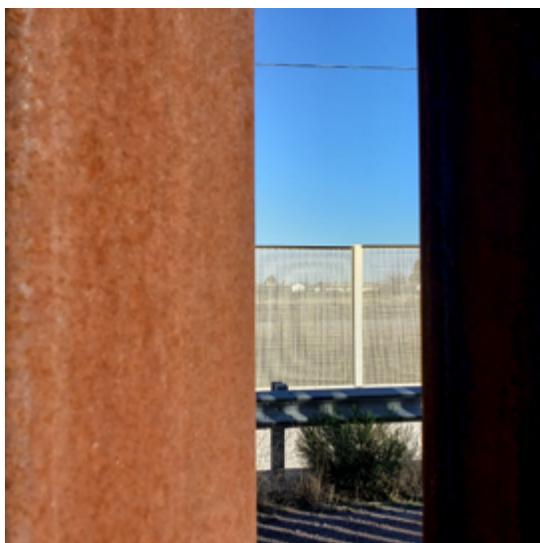
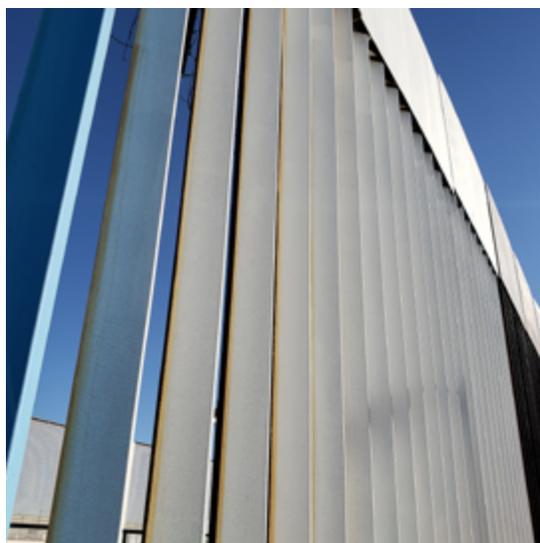
Canada has not heeded the call from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to suspend CGL's work. The province of BC passed legislation to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in November 2019 but the province's Premier, John Horgan, insists the pipeline will go ahead and that the application of UNDRIP will only be forward looking.

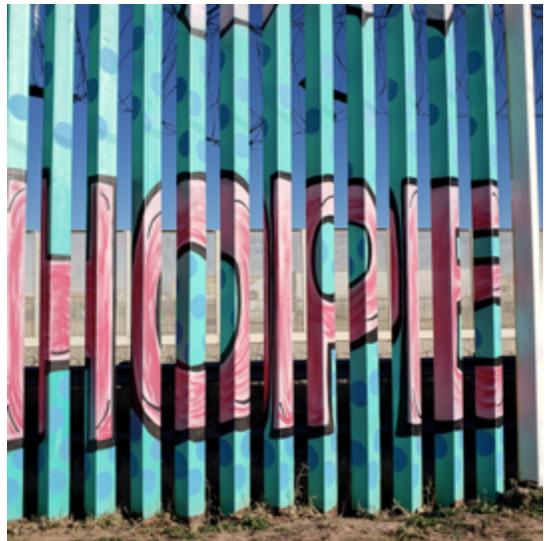
It doesn't matter how many apologies have been issued for residential schools, potlatch bans and other acts of oppression and genocide against Indigenous peoples when the reality on the ground says otherwise. This is why many are declaring, "Reconciliation is dead. Revolution is alive!"

This movement to respect Indigenous rights, crystallized at this time by the Wet'suwet'en struggle, is an important opportunity for church and society to show up and demonstrate what justice could look like. Many churches have been committed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and hosting the Kairos Blanket Exercises to learn about Canada's colonial history and their complicity in it. As we witness solidarity actions across Turtle Island (North America) in response to this struggle for Indigenous rights, faith communities have a real opportunity to step up and bravely engage in these issues, as places where people have a foundation of shared values and established relationships. ■

# Tear Down The Wall

WORDS AND IMAGES BY RACHELLE FRIESEN





The US policy to stop migrants has been prevention via deterrence. Around cities along the border, the U.S. has built the wall and increased border patrol; outside of the cities, the wall is incomplete and border patrol is sparser. U.S. policy has not deterred migrants, rather it has pushed migrants into the hands of smugglers and further into arid deserts and rougher terrain. U.S. policy has not deterred migrants; it has killed migrants.

But we live in hope. If walls can be built, then walls can also be torn down.

# Transforming Oppressions Requires Partnership and Creativity.

BY PALESTINE AND COLOMBIA TEAMS

The work of transforming oppressions is at the core of CPT's philosophy and methodology of being present and supporting local nonviolent change makers. The Palestine and Colombia teams have their unique methods and systems of work specifically designed to address the requests of local partners and take into consideration the historical context of the conflicts.

Palestinians have been living under an illegal military occupation and its resulting oppressive systems for 50 years. A network of checkpoints, roadblocks, security areas as well as settler and soldier violence deny the residents of Al Khalil (Hebron) their freedom of movement, restrict their access to their mosques, homes, schools and livelihoods. The Israeli military presence acts to protect illegal Israeli settlements, as well as those settlers who have broken into and occupied Palestinian homes.

After six decades of conflict that has displaced more than seven million people and killed more than 220,000, Colombia remains the most dangerous country in the world to be a human rights defender.

The team in Palestine focuses on monitoring and documenting checkpoints that children pass through on their way to school. They submit reports of incidents at the checkpoint to UNICEF. On Fridays they monitor prayers at the local mosque, and on Saturdays, settler tours of the Old City. They use their documentation of human rights violations, via reports, video and photography to amplify the voices of CPT's partners and challenge dominant narratives skewed against Palestinians.

The Colombian team accompanies partners, human rights defenders, activists and small farmers threatened with violence and forced displacement by armed economic interests who grab land for profit or drug trafficking. The team physically travels with partners, which deters violent actors from engaging with them. Additionally, the team advocates politically for partners at a local, national and international level, chipping away at structural systems of oppression that wreak havoc, death and displacement in the lives of grassroots human rights defenders.

The following is a candid conversation between the Palestine and Colombia teams about why they need to work on transforming oppressions in order to support local initiatives struggling to transform state-sponsored structural violence into systems that serve human life and dignity.



*CPTer Hannah Redekop crosses a swamp with Elio's assistance during a visit to the farming community of Las Pavas, Colombia. Photo: Caldwell Manners.*

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## TURTLE ISLAND SOLIDARITY NETWORK

May 29 - June 8

August 7 - 17

*Time of Grassy Narrow's Pow Wow*

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June 24 - July 4

## PALESTINE

August 3 - 17

October 17 - 31

December 1 - 15

## IRAQI KURDISTAN

September 27 – October 10

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**Palestine:** The work of the Palestine team is based on its relationship with the community. This relationship is dependent on our own work of undoing our own oppressions as non-natives; if we do not put energy into this work we can fall into the trap of being oppressive. This practice is necessary in order to build authentic relationships, if not, oppressive patterns will show in our behavior, work, partnerships and communications etc.

**Colombia:** Oppressions is a monster, and as a team we recognise that we are a part of and contribute to this monster. When we begin at this understanding, our relationship with the community and our partners is not one where we come to transform the oppression, but we come together to transform. Our partners believe in our work not because they think we can solve their issues, but because we can contribute to the work they are doing.

People in Colombia and Palestine have a common experience of forced land displacements.

People have a connection to the land beyond simple economics. Our work focuses beyond the armed conflict, it connects political and economic factors, and does not end only when the community receives its land title. We need to consider other factors for a real solution, like dynamics of oppressions that occur within the community itself. We cannot be naive to think that if the oppression from the state and corporations end, then all oppression ends. There are community dynamics as well.

**P:** Absolutely, the relationship of the struggles in Palestine and Colombia to the land is not simply economic. Palestinians have been continually displaced, their generational homes have been attacked, demolished and overtaken by settlers. Sometimes in our own oppression, we fail to grasp the strong relationship our partners have to the land, or why displacement from family land is oppressive. It is important for us to not romanticise that we can undo oppressions, but that oppressions can be undone when we are present and walk with our Palestinian partners in their journey.

**C:** The team has put an effort in supporting the leadership of women in our commitment to undoing sexism. Recently, two women from the team travelled to Las Pavas, a farming community we accompany – whose leadership has been dominated by men – to organize a women's gathering. The CPTers visited women in the community, inviting them personally. They discussed with them the best time to gather, keeping in mind to not



interfere with household responsibilities. We honestly did not expect more than ten women, 35 showed up - this is not something that happens when women are called to a meeting. They came with a lot of energy and ideas. We were really encouraged by how the women received the invitation. Sometimes there is an assumption, it is enough to just have women in the meeting. It is not enough. The women from Las Pavas felt heard and included. The work of transforming oppressions pushes us to find better and creative ways to challenge these set structures. It's a constant process, it's about the journey.

**P:** Oppression can make us risk averse, and it can crush creativity on team. We can take inspiration from the Colombia team with their energy and creativity.

Yesterday we had a team meeting about the 'Open Shuhada Street' demonstration coming up in February. Shuhada Street is of great symbolic importance to the people of Al Khalil and Palestine. Up until 1995 it was a key arterial route from the South of Hebron to the Old City, its markets and bus station. The full length of Shuhada St was closed, barricaded from the rest of the Old City, the shop

fronts and front doors of homes welded shut, and brutal military checkpoints imposed. Tragically and ironically, this was after the mosque massacre in 1995 when a Jewish settler killed over 30 Palestinian people and injured 150. This terrible event provided an opportunity for the settlers to extend their control over a large swathe of Hebron. They claimed that Shuhada street had to be closed 'for security reasons' whilst punishing the Palestinians for the crimes of settlers.

"Open Shuhada Street" is now an annual peaceful demonstration, always confronted with a violent Israeli military response.

We recently met with our partners and we asked what CPT could do to support the demonstration. One of the community leaders responded by saying, "follow your mandate and be present" and so we plan to be present at the demonstration and monitor any human rights violations and show solidarity.

Just being present is sometimes all you can do. We can't stop oppression, occupation, or settler violence. However, being present with the community in their journey and honoring their request is a fundamental step towards transforming oppressions. ■

# Annual Report 2019

Twenty nineteen began with the difficult decision to close the Indigenous People's solidarity team, based in Winnipeg, Turtle Island. Seeing the need to be present with our indigenous partners and respond to emergencies, CPT Reservists in Turtle Island met the challenge with courage and creativity, forming the new Turtle Island Solidarity Network (TISN).

Meanwhile, other reservists responded to the humanitarian crisis on the US/Mexico border where migrants face numerous threats awaiting their asylum hearing to enter the U.S. Our teams in Colombia, Palestine, Iraqi Kurd-

istan, and Greece have grown. New CPTer's and interns joined the ongoing work to support partners in grassroots initiatives for non-violent resistance.

Back in the office, the now fully staffed Development Working Group has been fundraising to make sure we have the resources to respond to the needs of our partners, and to also create ways for your involvement. We ended the year meeting our financial goals. We are deeply grateful for your support and donations.

With new staff and deepened collaboration, the administrative team is highly motivated and dedicated to support the work of our teams, and to create platforms where you can be engaged with us in taking action for peace.

All of our work could not have been done without your partnership. We would not be able to stand in solidarity with communities across the globe fighting oppression, violence and hate. It is because of your generosity that we can commit to accompanying our partners, often in places where no one else is present.

We're starting twenty twenty with hope and determination. We promise to bring you stories of creative nonviolent changemakers who are building coalitions for their liberation, and for our liberation, which is intrinsically tied up with theirs.

*CPTer Phil Hart uses a canoe taxi to cross the Magdalena River on his way to the farming community of El Garzal, Colombia. Photo: Caldwell Manners.*





## Income

**\$1,043,600**

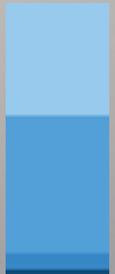
individuals: 60%  
congregations: 11%  
grants: 18%  
delegations: 5%  
major gifts: 5%  
other: 1%



## Expenses

**\$1,008,800**

program: 41%  
peacemaker corps: 51%  
fundraising/admin: 6%  
other: 2%



## Serendipity Fund

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#HearUsNowStopTheBombing #HearUsNowStopTheBombing #HearUsNowStopTheBombing

CPT - IRAQI KURDISTAN

# Hear Us Now: Stop the Bombing

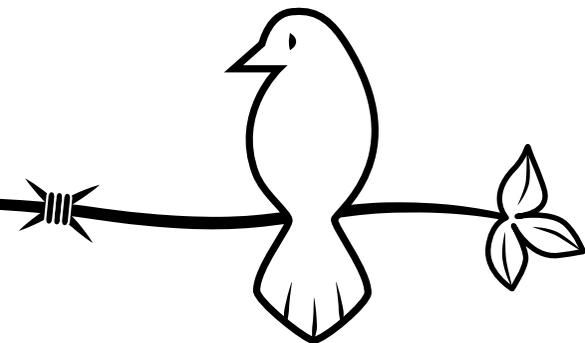
Support the campaign to end all cross-border bombings.

Take a picture of yourself with a sign demanding Turkey and Iran stop bombing civilians in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Share it on social media and use #HearUsNowStopTheBombing

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Building Partnerships to Transform  
Violence and Oppression

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