

community peacemaker teams

Save Oak Flat



Letter from the editor

Today, people whose land has been stolen, whose lands have been occupied and who have been forced landless are fighting and claiming these spaces back. What marks deep resistance in these struggles are efforts to decolonize beyond land. The struggle is to reclaim the space and what it means to belong to that space.

The colonial legal system rapidly advanced from barbed wires, which marked the lines on the map, to solid eight-meter walls that divided families, histories and identities. Léopold Lambert observes, "Walls are almost always built in such a way so that the bodies they organize in space are not able to significantly affect them with sheer strength. In simpler words, walls are made sufficiently solid so that people have to comply with them. Walls however require a controllable degree of permeability: this is how doors (rotating/sliding walls) were invented, along with a lock-key apparatus that grants a degree of permeability to some, while refusing it to others. The most extreme political and violent use of such a discretionary modulation of the walls' effect can be found in carceral settings, where people are kept captive by a spatial formation, where its key is kept by others. In the case of settler colonial property, walls are meant to consolidate the stronghold on stolen land."

I'm writing this letter to you from northeast India, where the government is attempting to pass a law that will roll back the protection

of forests up to one hundred kilometres from the country's international boundaries, currently safeguarded by Indigenous laws and customs. This century-thick wall will continue enforcing a colonial legal system of extracting resources while violently suppressing the meaning of belonging to a land.

In this issue, you will read stories from Oak Flat to Palestine calling on resistance to a colonial enterprise that still thief, rob and plunder as if it were the last century. This systematic robbery still depends on the tried colonial legal system and is enforced by a wall made with recycled materials.

What, then, is our role? Where does anti-colonial solidarity come in?

Lambert reminds us, "At a moment of time when "decolonizing" has been emptied of its meaning by many as a handy verb to signify anything that vaguely questions the racist dimension of objects as diverse as band-aids, costumes, and dishes, we have at the heart of this issue, an interest to resituate land as the primary object of the decolonizing struggle."

I invite you to connect with us for our upcoming delegations as we explore these questions of decolonization and solidarity. Just like the movement for landback, where the protagonists are the colonized, and a unique topography defines each action - be it waves of the Mediterranean, the South Hebron hills, or the hot desert of northern Mexico - our participation in transformation will be defined and led by our partners.



In kindness,
Caldwell Manners
Communications Coordinator

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Camp Morningstar demands a just transition



In May, about 150 km northeast of Winnipeg, near where the Manigotagan River empties into Lake Winnipeg, a group of CPT members sat around a sacred fire with Indigenous land defenders under the shade of towering jack pines.

Around the fire, Marcel Hardisty, a Hollow Water First Nation member and former band councillor, told us about his people's sacred relationship with the land and the spiritual significance of the fine white silica sand common to this area. In the springtime, thunder beings energize the sand, he said. Lightning strikes fuse the sand into glass crystals that his people use in ceremonial rattles and burial practices.

We were meeting at the place where, on a biting cold winter night in 2019, a handful of young people from Hollow Water First Nation erected a tipi and kindled a sacred fire on the site of a proposed silica sand mine. Calgary-based Canadian Premium Sand planned to operate the open pit mine 24 hours a day, seven days a week for 54 years, mining 12 acres of land per year to extract silica sand for use in hydraulic fracturing. Canadian Premium

Sand had gained approval for the project by signing a \$250,000 benefit agreement with Hollow Water First Nation's five-member chief and council without the consent of the broader community.

Many community members opposed the sand mine and wanted to protect the forest where moose give birth and people run traplines and gather medicines. Camp Morningstar quickly grew to include several tents, an outhouse, a sweat lodge and a meeting place. Supporters came from nearby communities, including Bloodvein, Brokenhead, Seymourville, Manigotagan, and Winnipeg. Environmental groups like the Wilderness Committee and Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition also supported the camp. The protest succeeded in stalling development on the mine until the market for fracked gas shifted and Canadian Premium Sand suspended the project.

It was a victory for the community organizers. But a year later, Canadian Premium Sand returned with a new proposal. Now they plan to mine the nearby shore of Lake Winnipeg, close to four communities and 300 cottagers.

cont'd on page 15

Living Among the Angels: Apache Stronghold Prays to Save Oak Flat



Since 5 May, the CPT-Turtle Island Solidarity Network has accompanied Apache Stronghold in Oak Flat, Arizona, in the United States. Members of the San Carlos Apache describe Oak Flat (Chi'chil Biłdagoteel) as their most important sacred site. Amid a semi-arid landscape of mountains, canyons, and shrubland, Oak Flat is a place of sacred springs and ancient oak trees. It is where Apache people harvest medicinal plants and celebrate coming-of-age rituals. It is the place where Ga'an dwell — guardians, angels or messengers of Usen, the creator. Rock paintings, petroglyphs, remnants of ancient homes and gravesites testify to the presence of ancestors since time immemorial.

Oak Flat also happens to lie above a large copper deposit which Resolution Copper has lobbied for decades to exploit. In 2014, the company secured a backroom deal with Arizona Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake. The senators drafted legislation to transfer the land to Resolution Copper and pushed

it through the United States Congress by adding it to a government-sponsored military funding bill. While the land transfer has not yet occurred, Resolution Copper has already begun digging shafts on adjacent land in order to drain the groundwater from below Oak Flat in preparation for mining. Apache Stronghold is trying to stop the project with a lawsuit arguing that mining at Oak Flat violates their First Amendment rights and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

In conversation with CPT members, Apache Stronghold leader Dr. Wendsler Nosie emphasized that this latest act of land theft must be understood in the context of centuries of colonial genocide. On 10 May, Wendsler took CPT members to visit the memorial at the site of the Old San Carlos, where Apache and other Indigenous people were confined as prisoners of war for decades. He explained with pride that the Apache were the last Indigenous people subjugated by invading US settlers and that the memory of rooted and



traditional ways is not distant.

Because of mining, settlers displaced the Apache from their lands around Oak Flat 150 years ago, and they are continuing to do so today. In the 1870s, when silver and gold were found near Oak Flat, settlers came looking for precious metals. The federal government had promised to reserve a territory for the Apache in the Treaty of Santa Fe in 1852 but never established the boundaries of this territory. As the number of settlers increased, the government allowed mining on lands previously understood to belong to the Apache and shifted to an explicit policy of genocide. Settlers and the US Army attacked Apache people regularly in the following years; at one point, General James Carleton ordered Apache men “killed wherever found.”

Between 1871 and 1874, the US government forced 4000 Indigenous people in southeastern Arizona off their traditional lands and onto the Old San Carlos reservation. The government designated all of them as the “San Carlos

Apache Tribe,” when in fact, they were from many clans and peoples, including Yavapais and Mohaves as well as 15 Apache clans. The people imprisoned in the Old San Carlos reservation called it “Hell’s 40 Acres”;—a barren land incapable of supporting traditional food plants.

The Old San Carlos site was gradually abandoned starting in the 1910s and 1920s when the US government prepared to build the Coolidge Dam. As the dam flooded the area, people had to move their ancestors’ graves. A mass grave containing at least 200 Apache people is now underwater. The water also covers the ruins of the military base where US soldiers served as prison guards to the Apaches.

The Old San Carlos memorial overlooks the dam reservoir and consists of several metal sculptures. The figure of an Apache horseback rider, with arms raised to the sky, stands ahead of four figures representing an Apache family, all gazing skyward. The children carry

the implements of a land-based livelihood: the boy, a bow and arrows; the girl, a basket for harvesting. Plaques record the words of community members reflecting on the importance of facing the ugliness of the past in order to find healing for the future.

The words of an elder engraved on the memorial capture the grief of a lost way of life in which spirituality was infused into a close relationship with the land: “There was innocence amongst the people who were free in spirit, thoughts, word and everyday living. They lived almost every moment in spirituality and everything was in balance, and that was harmony.”

The words of a young mother express uncertainty about which ways to teach her son: those of her people or of the settler culture. “Do I assimilate? What do I teach my son when I am confused and frustrated?”

Looking to the future, the words of Naelyn Pike, Wendsler’s granddaughter, then nine years old, convey resolve to preserve land and culture: “[Let us] be the proudest people and help the rest of the world to understand all Usen’s creations. For we must save the spirit of Mother Earth.”

Wendsler explained how Apache Stronghold is resisting assimilation, keeping traditional ways alive through spiritual practice. He lamented settler people’s disconnection from the land, which must be protected to sustain life. Wendsler spoke of how the United States has offered the Apache people flowers—colorful things without substance—while taking their water. Time after time, the promised economic benefits of resource extraction amount to little, while the destruction of the land threatens the survival

not only of the Apache but of all peoples.

Mining has destroyed much of the land around Oak Flat. The mines have used up vast amounts of groundwater, and tailings will contaminate the region for decades to come. “The only green place with food growing in it is Oak Flat,” Wendsler continued. “That is why the place is sacred. It’s because it is alive. All around is death, and they want to kill the last place that has life.”

Wendsler emphasized that Apache Stronghold’s fight is spiritual. “So many people practice rituals but have lost their connection to God,” he said. In returning to Oak Flat, his people are going back and living in the sacred place where they used to live among the Ga’an, the angels.

Naelyn Pike’s words preserved at the Old San Carlos memorial beautifully sum up the vision of resistance, healing, and renewal that Apache Stronghold seeks to put into practice:

I will no longer be a victim to the disaster that existed here. I will heal along with many others, and will push to regain our identity, and work to restore our people’s religion.

We must protect all Usen’s creations, as did our ancestors. So I ask each of you today to join us in the healing so that we may change tomorrow. Help me to give... my little sisters and those yet to be born, a chance to enjoy all that was created.

As Apache Stronghold faces the threat of mining under Oak Flat, people continue to gather on the land to pray. All of us, of all traditions, are invited to pray to save this sacred place. Through our prayer, those of us who are settlers on this land may begin the generational process of reconnecting with the Creator through creation. ■



A prayer for resilience



Dear Lord,

I am writing to you during these challenging times faced by my fellow Palestinians in Palestine. Our homes, people, and animals have been subjected to destruction by Israeli settlers. The communities in Masafer Yatta live in constant fear, always prepared for the presence of settlers and soldiers. They live under the constant threat of their houses being demolished by the far-right government. I find it disheartening that justice and equality seem elusive for my people, including myself.

Despite these difficulties, my faith in you remains steadfast. I find hope in the new leaves that adorn the trees, and I cherish moments of happiness when I witness elderly people in the Old City of al Khalil/Hebron engaged in lively backgammon games. The achievements of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement continue to empower me, and the love I see through my mother's eyes strengthens my resolve.

I trust that you are not disappointed in me for my lack of complete understanding. I believe in your ability to bring about justice and equality for all. I hold onto the hope that one day, I will be able to enjoy my basic rights, and my community will experience safety and happiness.

Words fail to fully express the depth of my emotions, but my prayers for the resilience of the resistance, the well-being of indigenous peoples, and the work of peacemakers will persist.

With enduring love,

Ahmad

Join an upcoming delegation to Palestine

Multifaith peacemaking: September 27 to October 9
Olive Harvest: November 3 to 15

Sign up at cpt.org/delegations or scan



From Olive Trees to Superpowers

By Ahmad Abu Munshar

A superhero is a character who embodies the values of saving people, fighting evil, and promoting peace and justice in the world. Children often see superheroes as role models, buying their merchandise, and emulating them in their play.

While on patrol near the Ibrahim mosque during Ramadan, CPT observed Palestinians bringing their own prayer rugs with them to pray on the street or close to the mosque. They later used these rugs as capes while walking near a checkpoint on their way home. This suggests a concept of a Palestinian superhero and what such a character might look like. Perhaps, Palestinian children have already created their own superheroes in their own unique ways and imagine becoming that superhero.

However, the idea of a Palestinian superhero is contrasted by the fact that Marvel Comics has already created an Israeli superhero named Sabra. This is particularly troubling for many Palestinians as the name Sabra is associated with the Sabra and Shatila massacre of 1982, where thousands of Palestinians were killed by a right-wing Lebanese militia, with the complicity of the Israeli army (Aljazeera, 2022).

The utilization of this name by Marvel Comics to represent a superhero raises further inquiries and concerns, particularly during a period marked by heightened violence and assassinations of Palestinians. The introduction of Sabra into a prominent series like Captain America prompts speculation that Israel is attempting to conceal its actions, including war crimes and apartheid. Through the guise of artistic expression, it has also been called artwashing.

In a recent CNN interview, a Palestinian-American writer and analyst expressed his

view on the matter, stating that “the whole concept of portraying Israeli spies as heroes is insensitive and disgraceful.” He went on to highlight that “the glorification of violence against Palestinians, as well as Arabs and Muslims more generally, in mainstream media, has a long and troubling history in the West, which continues to this day.”

The creation of Sabra’s character is further controversial in that her birthplace is attributed to Jerusalem. Superheroes like Batman, Spiderman, and Superman all have a



city which they claim as their own: Gotham City, New York, and Metropolis. Therefore, creating this narrative that Jerusalem belongs to Israelis because of Sabra’s birthright displaces Palestinians from this space. On the other hand, alongside the creation of Sabra in 1981 was the birth of The Arabian Knight, described as a legendary Muslim hero with multiple wives, further contributing to stereotypes against Arabs.

It wouldn't be a huge stretch of imagination if Marvel came up with another storyline for Sabra, where settlers living in Hebron ask for help from Sabra to remove Palestinians living in the area, giving settlers full control of the city and turning the rest of the Ibrahimi Mosque into a synagogue. This story would help their narrative, artwashing the reality of ethnic cleansing, displacement, and Israel settler-colonialism, as well as the many massacres that Israel has inflicted upon Palestinians, such as the 1994 Ibrahimi mosque massacre.

to introduce a Palestinian superhero who actively fights against the occupation and oppression occurring in Palestine.

In this context, I have devised an idea for a Palestinian superhero from Jerusalem who embodies the spirit of a golden-age heroine. Her powers emerged 20 years ago when she was in her 40s, characterized by white and black hair, a strong face, and a fit physique. She wears a traditional Palestinian costume and adorns a keffiyeh around her neck. Taking care of her land, which is abundant with olive trees, seasonal fruits, and mints, she faced the unfortunate event of Israeli soldiers from the Givati Brigade dividing her land and cutting down her olive trees.

She courageously handcuffed herself to the remaining tree, and miraculously, just before it was cut down, she obtained the last remaining olive. At that moment, she gained superhuman abilities, including the power to communicate and understand people from all walks of life. Additionally, she possesses the ability to rebuild what was once destroyed by the army or malevolent forces, symbolized by her planting an olive branch from a kind of crown on her forehead. Another remarkable ability she possesses is the power to bring back superheroes from the brink of death.

The presence of a superhero who can restore the damage caused by Israeli soldiers and bring care, love, and healing to every place she visits would be immensely beneficial. Acting as a nurturing figure for all, she can provide hope and solace to those who have endured loss and suffering. This imaginative concept serves as a way to give back to Palestinians and contribute to alleviating the pain and hardship they have experienced.

Finally, the superhero is named Shireen, in honour of Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian martyr who tragically lost her life at the hands of Israeli soldiers in Jenin. If you would like to take action and express your opposition to Marvel's Israeli Mossad Agent Superhero, you can sign the letter from American Muslims for Palestine by scanning the qr code.



As a Palestinian, I would like to suggest that if Marvel seeks to include more diverse characters, they should actively seek the input of marginalized communities in creating such characters. For example, in the case of an Israeli superhero like Sabra, Marvel could have portrayed her as a fighter against the actions of her own government toward Palestinians, showcasing solidarity with the oppressed group. Furthermore, it would be meaningful

Up to 600 people drown off Pylos, Greece only days after EU leaders agreed to further erode the right to asylum

An open letter by over 180 human rights organizations and initiatives together with Tima Kurdi, aunt of Alan Kurdi

June 20, 2023

Today on World Refugee Day, we jointly demand full and independent investigations into the events, clear consequences for those responsible, an end to the systematic pushback practices at the European borders, and justice for the victims.

Ten years after the two shipwrecks off Lampedusa, Italy, killing around 600 people and causing an immense public outcry, up to 600 people drowned off Pylos, Greece, in the Mediterranean Sea. On June 14, 2023, once again, the European border regime killed people exercising their right to seek protection. We are shaken! And we stand in solidarity with all survivors and with the families and friends of the deceased. We express our deep condolences and grief.

So far, uncountable questions remain unanswered. According to testimonies of the survivors, the Hellenic coast guard towed the boat causing it to capsize. Why was this incredibly dangerous maneuver attempted at all? Did the Hellenic coast guard tow the boat toward Italy to push people forward into Italian or Maltese responsibility? Why did neither the Hellenic coast guard nor the Italian or Maltese authorities intervene earlier even though they were alerted at least 12 hours before? What role did the European border and coast guard agency Frontex play?

In all this uncertainty, one thing is unmistakable: This shipwreck—as well as countless others before—is the direct

consequence of political decisions taken to prevent people from arriving in Europe. This shipwreck results from the impunity of illegal activities exercised by states at borders and the legalization of practices that aim to normalize the deprivation of rights of people on the move. Activists and organizations have denounced systematic push- and pullbacks, delays and omission of rescues, criminalization of civil search and rescue operations, and cooperation with unsafe countries to externalize European borders and to carry out refolements. European migration and externalization policies cause physical and psychological violence, imprisonment, and death. Stop diverting your responsibility – Stop killing people on the move!

So far, the European Union and its member states have shown no intention to learn from the past years and end the deaths in the Mediterranean. Instead, they tighten their deadly policies of isolation. Only last week, on 8 June, the Council of the European Union agreed on a reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) leading to a massive deprivation of fundamental rights, such as the right to asylum or the right to move freely.

It was only a matter of time until the next shipwreck happened and it will happen again while conditions in countries of origin, transit, and departure worsen and border practices force people on the move to take more dangerous routes. Since Lampedusa in 2013, we have seen at least 27.047 deaths in the Mediterranean Sea. One of them was Alan

Kurdi. His aunt, Tima Kurdi, loudly speaks out about the deadly shipwreck:

This shipwreck brings back my pain, our pain. I am heartbroken. I am heartbroken for all the innocent souls lost that are not just numbers in this world. "Never again" we heard in 2015, I heard it countless times. And what changed? How many innocent souls have been lost at sea since then? I want to take you back to September 2, 2015, when all of you saw the image of my nephew, the 2-year-old baby lying on the Turkish beach. What did you feel when you saw his image? What did you say, what did you do? Me, when I heard about my nephew drowning, I fell to the floor crying and screaming as loud as I could because I wanted the world to hear me! Why them? Why now? And who's next? Since then, I decided to raise my voice and speak up for everyone who is not heard. And most importantly for my nephew, the boy on the beach, Alan Kurdi, whose voice will never be heard again. Please do not be silent and add your voice to mine. We cannot close our eyes and turn our backs to people seeking protection. Open your heart and welcome people fleeing to your doorstep.

The European migration policy needs to change now. It needed to change a long time ago already. It needs to provide safe ways to flee. Building a wall is no solution. Detaining rescue ships for saving lives is no solution. Blaming people as smugglers is no solution. People are suffering, and they will always find a way to flee. You have the power to decide if they have to take dangerous routes because there is no other way to go. Act on it!"

With the unforgivable shipwreck off Greece, we see that the Mediterranean Sea is not only a graveyard, it is a crime scene. A scene of crimes against humanity with millions of privileged tourists continuing to cruise on it freely every year. On this account, we demand an immediate end to (systemic) border violence. We demand that:

1. both Greek and European governments and institutions ensure that full, thorough, and independent investigations into these events are conducted. It's time for complete transparency about what happened and accountability of those responsible. This includes officials who were directly involved in the events through decision-making, as well as those political leaders who have been facilitating and perpetuating the hostile practices at the external borders for years. Access to justice for the victims and their loved ones must be ensured.

2. the Greek government immediately releases the Pylos shipwreck's survivors from

(semi-)closed facilities and instead provides them with dignified accommodation and any kind of support needed, such as independent legal counseling, psychological support, and the possibility to communicate with families and friends. Furthermore, we petition for the release of the 9 men arrested. We condemn the criminalization of people on the move, blamed for illegalized entries and deaths at sea. These accusations are intended to exonerate responsible state actors.

3. all European member states at the external borders stop the weaponizing of time by delaying rescue efforts. Furthermore, we demand independent investigations and conclusive measures by the European Commission against the systematic practice of pushbacks and non-assistance at sea and on land conducted by European member states – as widely demonstrated by organizations and activists in recent years.

4. the European Union and its member states provide safe and legal routes to Europe as the only solution to avoid further loss of life at sea. The CEAS reform, further eroding the right to asylum in the European Union, must not become law. Additionally, we demand the creation of a long overdue European state-led rescue program.

Signatories

(find the complete list at cpt.org)

Tima Kurdi
Abolish Frontex
aditus foundation
AED – European Democratic Lawyers
Afrique-Europe-Interact
AK Arbeitskämpfe, Assoziation für kritische Gesellschaftsforschung (AkG)
Alarme Phone Sahara
All Included Amsterdam
Amal Berlin!
Anarchist Solidarity
antira.org
ASGI – Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration
Association for Justice, Equality and Peace (AJEP)
Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants – ASAM Türkiye
Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants – ASAM Greece
Asylum Links
Baobab Experience
Barnim für Alle
BIPoC Ukraine and friends in Germany
Blue Door Education
Border Forensics
borderline-europe – Human Rights without Borders
Boza Fii – Alarm Phone Dakar
Bozen Solidale
Community Peacemaker Teams

Peacemaking around the dinner table



On a sunny spring morning in Iraqi Kurdistan, Community Peacemaker Teams made a trip to the mountain village of Basta to visit our long-term partner Kak Bapir and his family. The road wound through green grassy slopes and military checkpoints. Streams flowed through valleys far below us, shepherds on donkeys watched their flocks grazing, and birds flitted around. Above us rose the stunning vista of the rocky Zagros Mountains – the peaks still covered in snow, and Iranian military bases on the border just visible to the naked eye.

CPT has been periodically making this journey for fifteen years since we first made contact with Kak Bapir. Iranian and Turkish bombings, ostensibly targeting PKK guerillas, had made the local villages unlivable. CPT advocated for a shelter camp where villagers could take refuge and to rebuild infrastructure after they had returned home.

The bombings have become less frequent in the Basta region recently, though the area is still highly militarized. But on this occasion, we were making the trip to Basta just to keep in touch with old friends.

Over a delicious home-cooked meal of chicken, beans, rice and qoraw (yoghurt

soup – a local delicacy), we chatted about peacemaking. Kak Bapir has actually been involved with CPT a lot longer than any of our current team, and some of the members he mentioned in stories were people none of us have ever met. Despite the circumstances that had brought this Kurdish village elder and an international human rights organization together, the stories were full of laughter and fond memories.

Kak Bapir is a sheikh—a leadership role in his local community which means he has been called on at times to do some peacemaking of his own. His father was a sheikh before him, and so from an early age, Kak Bapir had an opportunity to observe a traditional Kurdish method of conflict resolution.

“The best tool for peacemaking is the dinner table,” his father used to say. Well, I’m paraphrasing a bit here, because most Kurdish people don’t actually use tables. He used the word “sifra,” the mat where Kurdish cultures sit on the ground to eat, just as we were at that moment.

Kak Bapir learned this by example when his father brought together two warring families after numerous people had been killed. The

sheikh butchered several animals from his own herd, sat the two families down to eat, and said, “Nobody leaves until you have made peace.”

Kak Bapir later copied the strategy when an incident of adultery threatened to spill over into violence. At another time, when Kurds had been forced to flee to Iran to avoid the persecution of Saddam Hussein, Kak Bapir witnessed an Iranian soldier beating a Kurdish refugee. He invited the soldier to dinner without telling him he had also invited the other refugee. At the table, as equals, the soldier apologized.

The residents of Basta are proud of its history as a “peace village.” The local oral history narrates how Basta was the setting for long and ultimately successful peace negotiations between the warring Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Kak Bapir’s father was instrumental in getting the two armies to sit down together while the whole village pitched in to cook the food.

There is a long history of conflict in Iraqi Kurdistan. Even in Kak Bapir’s lifetime there have been numerous wars—Iran against Iraq, Ba’athists against Kurds, Kurds against Kurds, US invasion, and bombing campaigns by Iran and Turkey. The bombs are still falling in these Iraqi Kurdish mountain regions, with a deadly blast occurring the day after our visit.

But the desire and the ability to make peace is ever-present. Even those who experience much war, also carry a long history and depth

of experience in making peace. The Kurdish examples of Kak Bapir—developed over generations of sheikhs acting as elders in their communities—are a great testament to that and remind us how much we can all gain from the knowledge held in our various cultures.

But that doesn’t mean peacemaking is easy. In Kak Bapir’s words, “The most important thing is to be honest. A peacemaker can’t be corruptible, and they must always tell the truth, even when it costs you.” These lessons get learned the hard way in Iraqi Kurdistan, where CPT focuses a lot of its work on supporting journalists and activists who are targeted and imprisoned for speaking the truth and denouncing corruption.

The way to peace is full of joy and friendship; but is also slow, complex, and sometimes dangerous—somewhat like the road back from Basta, where stunning views and fresh mountain air mix with blind turns, hair-raising cliff edges, potholes and military checkpoints.

But it’s helpful to know that we don’t travel alone. The desire for peace is buried deep in each of us, and there are many inspirations and lessons to be learned from others on the journey. Peace and peacemaking bring out the best in us, allow for human flourishing and bring people together from across all kinds of divides. Whether in village disputes, standing up to corruption or resisting the military encroachment of neighbouring countries, Kurdistan is full of courageous and creative peacemakers working on a better future. ■



"We want Turkey to leave our village; then we can freely go back to our mountains to tend the animals."

On May 13, members of the Iraqi Kurdistan team CPT visited each of Lazim Murad, Bahjat Awdi and their families in Khalifani village in Saidakan district in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which were targeted directly by the Turkish soldiers on January 2019.

While shepherding at the foot of Chidel mountain, 18-year-old Lazim and 15-year-old Bahjat were struck and severely wounded by mortar fire from nearby Turkish military bases. Lazim and Bahjat told CPT that while they still suffer pain from remaining pieces of shrapnel inside them, the deepest wound is seeing the Turkish soldiers on the mountain behind their village every day.

Learn more about CPT's work in Kurdistan at cpt.org

A report on the humanitarian crisis in El Guayabo

10 Years Accompanying the Community of El Guayabo

Since 2012, CPT has walked alongside the farming community of El Guayabo, bearing witness to their love, struggle and peaceful resistance for the land. We have witnessed increased violence against the community, which has required them to develop forms of self-protection, and CPT's accompaniment has strengthened these efforts. Our presence generates a deterrent against legal and illegal armed actors in the territory, allowing the community to replenish themselves and continue the struggle.

Political and legal persecution, threats, uncertainty, and the fear of losing their only livelihood have led them on a path of resistance that they cannot afford to give up—despite the fatigue the threats bring. Through psychosocial support, we listen and provide them with a safe space to process their experience.

The silence of the State in the face of the cries of pain, anger, and indignation of the community and the historical abandonment to which they have been subject without explanation has pushed the community to reinvent itself and create new ways of resisting and persisting in their territory. Through our political accompaniment, we amplify their voices through letters, videos, meetings, public actions, prayers, marches, emails etc.

Context of the report

El Guayabo is a small humble farming community that has faced forced evictions, threats, judicial persecution, and physical and emotional violence by legal and illegal armed groups, as well as painful state abandonment. In addition, in 2022, the rainy season lasted for nine months, flooding their fields and destroying crops and pasture land, which their animals depend on. They were left with little capacity to sustain themselves, and now they

find themselves in a severe humanitarian crisis that has them on the brink of starvation.

This report arises from the need to demonstrate the state's historical abandonment of El Guayabo and the issues that prevent the community from living with dignity and peace.

Petitions

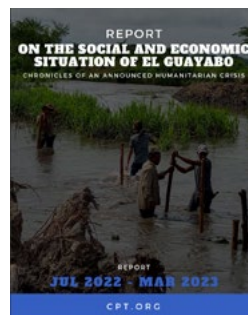
» We ask that the national and local governments take joint actions to address the humanitarian crisis. These actions must go hand in hand with the measures being taken to repair the damage the river has caused.

» We ask the government to take actions that allow the community of El Guayabo to remedy the historical damage caused by state abandonment and that have deepened with the current humanitarian crisis.

» We ask the Puerto Wilches administration to establish more fluid communication with the communities, allowing them to create joint strategies to address the humanitarian crisis.

» We ask the national government and its institutions to address the environmental situation that caused the retaining wall breach.

» We ask for financial support from the national government to ensure the community has the essential resources to sustain itself until the crisis is overcome.



Read the entire report at cpt.org

Scan the qr code



Is peacemaking still a thing?

Join a delegation to Treaty 3 territory in Northwestern Ontario, to the Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation) to Unmask and Dismantle settler Colonialism.

August 15 to 25

This delegation will do a deep dive into the historical and current realities of colonialism and explore ways we can get involved in the decolonization process. Through this delegation we will explore themes such as environmental racism, abolition movements, Indigenous

Join a delegation to Lesbos, Greece on Resisting Borders.

September 6 to 13

The island of Lesbos is a place known since antiquity. It has always been a crossroads of cultures and carries a rich and composite history. Lesbos is also where the European border regime has been experimenting with different border militarization methods to keep migrants away from the EU through confinement, scaremongering and illegal pushbacks.

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The company intends to use the glass to make solar panels.

Marcel and others fear for the health of the water, the land, and the people if the mine goes ahead. The sand acts as a filter to all the waterways in the region, Marcel told us. Silica dust is a carcinogen and can cause silicosis, a disease of the lungs. A silica sand mine operated for decades on Black Island in Lake Winnipeg. Marcel's people once lived on Black Island. They called it Manitou Minis, which he translates as "great mystery island." They were moved off of the island to make way for the mine. Today on the island, leached metals stain the sand dunes orange, streams run violet, and chocolate-coloured water stagnates in pools.

"We aren't radicals," says MJ McCarron, a teacher who married into the Hollow Water community. She has two sons who are members of Hollow Water First Nation, one of whom has worked with silica sand and knows its dangers.

"People gather medicines in this forest," she says. In an NFB video documentary produced by Anishinabe filmmaker Kevin Settee, an elder from Hollow Water talks about gathering bearberry, Labrador tea, strawberries and blueberries. "If this land is turned into a sand mine, we're going to lose all those medicines we need for our own healing," she says.

The global appetite for the minerals needed in the green energy transition is expected to increase in the years to come. Projects such as this one are often discussed as a balancing act, weighing one public good against another. Jobs, economic development, and minerals for clean energy are one side of the scale and the health of the land and waterways and land-based cultures are on the other.

Potawatomi scholar and biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer likes to remind her fellow humans that the technological fixes we come up with are never as good as the ones nature provides. Millions of dollars are spent on researching and developing carbon capture technology. "There already is a system that pulls carbon from the atmosphere and stores it for centuries," Kimmerer said at a recent talk. This system can "generate oxygen, build soil, protect biodiversity, purify water and make us feel happy and peaceful. It's called a forest."

At Camp Morningstar we shared a feast that came from the waters of Lake Winnipeg: a casserole of pickerel cheeks seasoned with lemon and baked in cream sauce.

We shared food and gifts and stories and prayers.

"Everything we have in order to live as human beings comes from Mother Earth," Marcel told us. "So we have to protect it. That is who we are as people. We are the land."

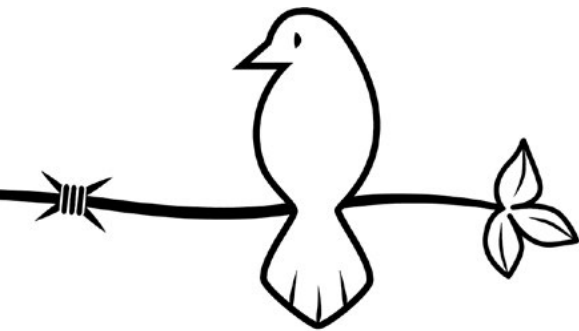


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