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BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS
TO TRANSFORM VIOLENCE
AND OPPRESSION

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Greetings from the Interim Administrative Director

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to join CPT for a year as Interim Administrative Director. The Steering Committee's goal for our work together is to examine and strengthen the administrative organization of CPT. It's not very glamorous work, but we believe that it is critical for the ongoing sustainability of CPT's mission, and for us to remain true to our values, commitment to undoing oppressions, and the pursuit of a global-impact vision.

Our decision to take this interim time is an opportunity to reflect on what is at stake through the work of CPT. As poet and black activist Audre Lorde said: "Unless one lives and loves in the trenches, it is difficult to remember that the war against dehumanization is ceaseless." The task of an administrator is to examine and provide the resources and structures which ensure that life within CPT honors complete humanness, and to support life in the trenches, so that we can empower our team members in the field to continue defying the ceaseless efforts to dehumanize individuals, communities, and entire populations.

During this transitional time, we are grateful for your continued partnership. We deeply value your financial support, participation in delegations, attention to the stories of CPTers, prayer, and help in spreading the CPT message.

Together we move forward.



Toward peace,
Jonathan Shively

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A message to our Canada supporters: CPT, CRA Charitable Status, and Choices of Integrity

Prior to 2015, CPT Canada had a Joint Ministries Agreement with Mennonite Church Canada, which issued tax receipts. Since then, CPT Canada has no longer been able to issue tax receipts, because we do not have charitable status. For more than a year, CPT has spent time researching, talking to lawyers and professional fundraisers about how to make charitable status possible. Through our research, we have decided not to attain official status, and we think it is important that we report back to the broader CPT community about it.

While the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has lessened their audits, the process of attaining and maintaining CRA charitable status remains difficult. Currently, CPT is able to provide authentic and honest peacebuilding and advocacy based on the needs and requests of our partners. It is because of our current practices that we are able to “amplify their voices.” While CPT’s peace education does fall under CRA guidelines, if we were to attempt to get charitable status, we would have to change or stop a lot of the other work we currently do. For example: we are vocal supporters of the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions Movement; we recently campaigned for the Canadian government to implement UNDRIP through Bill C262; we have been critical of the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement; and we currently have the ability to engage in civil disobedience. If we received CRA charitable status, this would change.

With this in mind, CPT Canada is not currently looking to get CRA charitable status, as it would restrict our ability to live out our mission, vision and values. However, we recognize that accountability of funds is always important. If at any time you would like to see CPT’s budget and account of funds, we can make that available to you. In the meantime, we are exploring ways that large donors in Canada can donate to CPT in the USA, where we do have charitable status.

Thank you for the example you give me of Christian courage.

ANNE BIRD
NEW YORK, USA

Thank you for your [fundraising] letter. My prayers are with you daily. I wish I could give you a million instead of [the enclosed] \$10.00. I stand in front of the court house [in my city] for ½ hour every Wednesday noon with a sign that says “The military spends 55% of all your taxes for war.” According to Ike [President Dwight Eisenhower] that cheats the needy and the poor. Isn’t it strange that we try to bring peace by killing people.

PRAYERS AND BLESSINGS,
SINCERELY,
MOSES BEACHY

RESPONSE:

Thank you so much to everybody who sends notes of encouragement and solidarity to CPT! It is of great value to all of us to be reminded that there is a wide, wonderful community of support standing alongside us in the nonviolent struggle for peace.

IN GRATITUDE,
CAITLIN LIGHT, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR



Álvaro García and his son embrace outside the Barrancabermeja prison. Photo: Caldwell Manners/CPT

Bella Unión Leader Álvaro García Released on Bail

Caldwell Manners, CPT Colombia

On October 3, after 18 months of imprisonment, human rights defender and leader of the Bella Unión campesinx* land struggle, Álvaro García, was released. His lawyer, Claudia Castellanos, petitioned for his release under the “Expiration of Terms,” a legal procedure that guarantees García a speedy trial and prevents the prosecution from delaying the trial to their advantage.

On April 24, 2016, armed policemen arrested García during the raid of his home in the farming village of Bella Unión, three hours north of Barrancabermeja. He was charged with the conspiracy to commit a crime, possession of weapons, and uttering threats.

“It was a very difficult time with lots of uneasiness and stress, I thought a lot about my family,” García said to describe his 536 days in prison. “I had to console myself, but it was not sustainable.” García’s family, who live in Bella Unión, could visit him weekly, but the expensive three hour river travel proved prohibitive. “With this process one cannot tell when they could be harassed or when the adversary [Rodrigo Lopez Henao] could provoke them.”

The campesinxs of Bella Unión and El Guayabo have been in a legal land dispute over 400 hectares of land with Rodrigo Lopez Henao, who claims his father was displaced by them in collaboration with the guerrillas, an accusation that the campesinxs vehemently deny. Since 2012, Henao has initiated judicial processes to displace them from the land, while at the same time is using violent means to harass the campesinxs. Seventeen denunciations** have been filed against him for the destruction of property, threats and violence against women.

García’s return to his farm does not diminish the risk he or the other campesinxs face. “The work of accompaniment is very important at this time,” says Dimas Opsina, leader of neighboring village El Guayabo. “Our adversary thought he could lock Álvaro up, but now he is free. This might cause him to retaliate.”



CPTer Marian DeCouto waits outside the Barrancabermeja prison.

Photo: Caldwell Manners/CPT



Álvaro García spent a good portion of the evening during the celebration of his release making phone calls. His cake reads, “Bienvenido a la Libertad”- “Welcome to Freedom.”

Photo: Caldwell Manners

García had to spend one more night in prison after the judge issued his release orders on October 12. CPT's Marian DeCouto was present at the courthouse when he emerged from the courtroom. “He burst into an immediate smile as we cheered his release. After visiting Álvaro every two weeks in a cramped visitor cage at the Barrancabermeja jail and having witnessed him through periods of optimism and faith and periods of desperation, this moment has been highly anticipated. The hour outside the courtroom felt tense, we were prepared to brace ourselves for either outcome. The energy of excitement and joy was overwhelming as we scrambled to hug him.” CPT has been accompanying the villages of Bella Unión and El Guayabo since 2013 in their resistance against displacement.

“The criminal court system should not be used to resolve political land disputes such as the one Álvaro García is leading,” notes García's lawyer, Castellanos. The Colombian government has a historical practice of arresting human rights defenders and social activists on political charges of “Rebellion,” an accusation of ties to guerrilla groups used as a legal strategy to debilitate social organizing. In an attempt to depoliticize judicial persecution and continue the harassment, leaders are now being criminally charged. The result is the same: weaken and disrupt the ability of campesinx, human right defenders, and social activists to organize. In many cases these practices highlight the state's culpability and corruption in resolving land disputes, or the government's lack of willingness to guarantee security to persons threatened because of a connection with illegal armed groups who have had historic control in the area, as in the case of Bella Unión and El Guayabo. These legal cases often wane and leave the accused detained until the Expiration of Terms come into effect, or until a delayed ruling of innocence is issued.

18 months in prison was exhausting for García, former president of Bella Unión's Junta Accion Communal or Community Action Group, which also hurt his family economically. “I want to return back to my family, and maybe start working a little, dedicate myself to the daily tasks on the farm to try to recover from this crisis. Right now, I want to overcome this situation and the anomaly I experienced being locked up, so that I can share what I learned with my friends and we can continue doing what we have been doing but with caution and a deeper knowledge.”

*Small farmer. The ‘x’ is used for gender inclusivity.

**A denouncement is a report of a violation of human rights or a violation of the law, filed with an office of the government.



Doña Fany García, co-founder of Cahucopana, while planting in memory of the victims killed from her region. "Forgive is not to forget, it is to not allow history to repeat itself." Photo: Caldwell Manners

Celebrating Resistance

Carolina Gouveia, CPT Colombia

September 17 was a long day. We woke up early and traveled to Remedios, Antioquia where we met a caravan of about 30 people who were also preparing for the long journey of another six hours until the village of Lejanías. Joy and energy were palpable during this long ride. People were loud, singing and even dancing. The reason for the party may seem odd at first: Cahucopana (Corporation for Humanitarian Action, Peace and Coexistence of North-Eastern Antioquia) was recognized as a subject of collective reparation by the Unit for Attention and Reparation of Victims of the conflict in Colombia. They were celebrating that the state recognizes them as victims. It seems absurd but it makes sense.

The conflict in Colombia lasted more than 50 years. Many people lost their lives. Many lost sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. Many of them do not know what happened to their family members. According to the Victims Unit, Colombia has 8,532,636 direct and indirect victims of the armed conflict.

In 2016, the peace agreement between the FARC, formerly known as Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and the state created the Integral System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. This system exists in order to guarantee that what happened during the conflict will never happen again. One of its mechanisms is the recognition of individual and collective victims, such as the organization Cahucopana. Upon being recognized as victims, the process of reparation begins. Depending on the context, it may include *restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction* (meaning the verification of the facts and full and public disclosure of the truth), and *guarantees of non-repetition*.



Don Gerardo Acero, Doña Fanny García, Oscar Macías and Braulio García (Don Rayito), founders of Cahucopana are honoured by the current generation of the organization's human rights defenders. Photo: Caldwell Manners

On September 18th and 19th, delegates from different communities in the North-Eastern of Antioquia gathered for the Recognition of Victims Celebration. The members of Cahucopana reunited in the community of Lejanías, where 14 years ago the organization was founded after an imminent threat to be displaced by the National Army. This military action resulted in 18 extrajudicial killings, the so-called “false positives” (recognized as a crime against humanity), as well as bombing and forced displacement. These campesinxs, who fought in order to maintain their land, were falsely accused of being guerrillas, and many were killed for that reason. On September 18th, the state, through the Victims Unit, acknowledged its responsibility for the violence that Cahucopana and its members had suffered.

Recognizing that Cahucopana is a victim means that there were violations of the right of free movement of its members. Families had to leave their homes to ensure their dignity of life. Their rights to security and the right to organize were violated. All these rights are insured by the Colombian constitution.

When we hear from the leaders about the suffering and struggle that campesinxs in this region have gone through, it makes sense to celebrate. The most important points for Cahucopana's members are the satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition. The state recognizes their mistakes. It recognizes the stigma that campesinxs have suffered when they were accused of being guerrillas and recognizes their story. Not the version of the story that the state created, but the story that was lived by the campesinxs. The event was framed by moments of emotion. It began with a symbolic act of planting seeds in honor of the victims who lost their lives, followed by the founding leaders receiving self portraits with flowers and words of gratitude. The joy of knowing that the path of reconciliation is being built was contagious. They do not celebrate their victimization. They celebrate resistance. They celebrate forgiveness.



The landscape of Iraqi-Kurdistan.

“Everyone Says It’s Beautiful:” Kurdistan Before and After the Referendum

Rachelle Friesen, CPT Canada Coordinator

As the sun sets, its rays shine against the mountains of Bine Rashkin in Iraqi Kurdistan. The world around us turns golden. The farm we visit seems idyllic. Animals are grazing on the hillside as the breeze ruffles the trees down in the valley. Nearby you can hear a freshwater spring trickling behind the Saadi family home. “Everyone says it’s beautiful but if they knew what it was like with the bombings, they would say something different,” says one of the women from the family.

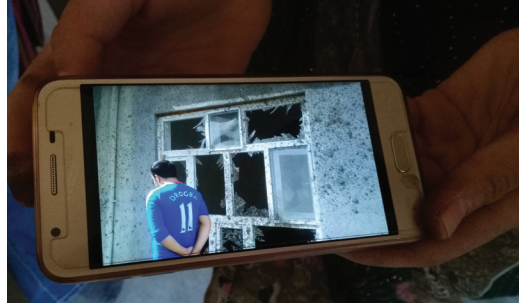
Cutting through the serene mountain landscape, just outside the family home, is a patch of scorched earth. On 23 September 2017, two days before the referendum on Kurdistan’s independence from Iraq, Iranian artillery bombarded the area. A rocket landed less than ten meters from the home, shattering windows and piercing both the house and one of the women of the family with shrapnel. She is still in hospital awaiting multiple surgeries to have both shrapnel and glass removed from her body. Iran claims they are targeting fighters in the area, but the family reports that the fighters are never hit; it is only the villagers that are the casualties.

In the north-eastern mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan, both Turkey and Iran frequently bomb farmland and villages, claiming to be targeting various militias. Yet the victims are the villagers, farmers and shepherds who have become a pawn in a larger political game. Life in the mountains is unpredictable and fraught with fear. The woman we visit with continues, “We are always prepared. When the bombings start we have to leave. We always have to be prepared.”

Her words seem like a metaphor for all life in Kurdistan. For three weeks in September I traveled to Iraqi Kurdistan, taking in the most stunning sites, eating delicious food, drinking sweet tea, and building authentic and lasting relationships. Yet cutting through the serene moments is a political reality, both past and present, of oppression, war, and instability.



Damage caused by Iranian rockets in Bine Rashkin.



Cell phone photo of damage from rockets in Bine Rashkin.

Under Saddam Hussein, the Kurds and the ethno-religious groups of Shi'a, Yazidis, Turkmen, Assyrians, and others were ruthlessly attacked. Implementing the Ba'athist Arabization (a process of making areas an Arab majority) and al-Anfal campaign before and during his eight-year-long war against Iran, Hussein ethnically cleansed vast areas inhabited by non-Sunni Arabs. Gas attacks, torture, bombings, mass executions, and forced migration were the reality in Northern Iraq in the late 1970s and 1980s. Assisting Hussein in his onslaught were foreign governments, including the USA, Soviet Union, France, Netherlands and most Arab states, who provided weapons, financial aid and/or chemical weapons agents to Iraq. Around a million people, mostly Kurds, were displaced, up to 200,000 killed and about 4,000 villages wiped out.

Upon the end of the Cold War and progressing dissolution of the Soviet Union, the USA-led coalition of former supporters eventually invaded Iraq in retaliation for Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The occupation of Kuwait's oil wells was Hussein's effort to recoup the tremendous financial debt accumulated during the war against Iran.

Following the popular uprising organized by the Kurdish guerrillas in 1991, which drove Iraqi forces out of the predominantly Kurdish territory, and the withdrawal of US forces, around two million Kurds fled to the neighboring countries of Turkey and Iran out of fear of Iraq's retaliation. Under international pressure, the United Nations created a safe haven for Kurds in Northern Iraq that the USA and Great Britain enforced with a no-fly zone.

The 1990s were a very difficult time for the Kurdistan Autonomous Region. Iraq was under severe economic sanctions, and the Kurdistan region was under an additional embargo by Hussein. Kurdish political tensions mounted. An internecine civil war broke out between two Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Once again villages fell under attack and were cleansed dependent on political alliance. In addition, Turkey began to bomb the villages in the borderland regions because of a newly established presence of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) fighting for the recognition of Kurdish rights in Turkey. In the subsequent years, Iran also began to bombard villages adjacent to its borders in its war against the guerrilla groups fighting for Kurdish rights in Iran.

The 2005 Iraqi constitution recognizes Iraqi Kurdistan as an autonomous region with its own legal system and political structures. The constitution took power over Iraq from the hands of Sunni Arabs and delegated it to the Shi'as. In the last decade, Kurdistan's autonomy, economic situation and position within Iraq and on a global scale have strengthened greatly. In the war against ISIS, Kurdish military forces took control of much of the territory which the previous Ba'athist regime had violently Arabized. When I visited Iraqi Kurdistan, I witnessed a region autonomous from Iraq, with concrete borders that allowed for a separate immigration and visa process, as well as policies of foreign trade and investment: pillars of a modern nation state.

I left Iraqi Kurdistan at the end of September, and yet the geopolitics today is entirely unrecognizable from when I was there. On 25 September, Iraqi Kurdistan held a referendum



Iraqi-Kurdistan

on independence from Iraq, which saw condemnation from the international community and threats of attack from Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. Days following the referendum, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey began to follow through on their threats. First international flights were canceled, then land borders were closed, with further promises of repression.

Within the last month the Iraqi government, alongside Hashd al-Shaabi (an Iranian and Shi'a backed militia, whose brutality has been compared to that of ISIS), has invaded and taken over Kirkuk and other disputed areas which, since 2014/2015, had been under the Kurdistan Regional Government's control. As Kurdish people, followed by Assyrian Christians and Yazidis, flee the area fearing ethnic-targeted attacks, the Iraqi government continues to re-impose its control over Iraqi Kurdistan and disregard its constitution. Kurdish control over borders and export of oil are now gone, while the KDP and PUK once again threaten civil war.

The Kurdish people are left with instability, their lives once again relying on the political whims and desires of local, regional, and international politics. As in previous struggles, the Kurdistan leaders seem intent on securing their own gains, while the Iraqi government imposes its control. All the while, the international community remains silent, not wanting to make precarious any political alliances that could interrupt their access to oil and regional interests.

As I remember the landscapes and people of Iraqi Kurdistan, I reflect on the last 40 years of life in Iraqi Kurdistan which has faced constant instability. "We always have to be prepared," the words of the woman from Bine Rashkin, apply to not only villager life in the mountains, but to the Kurdistan's reality of today. Just as the villagers become pawns for the Iranian and Turkish bombs, sadly so do the Kurdish people for both local and international politics.

The words of the woman from Bine Rashkin continue to echo. I think about Iraqi Kurdistan and how beautiful it could be. I imagine what it would be like if preserving and celebrating Kurdish peoples and Kurdistan's minorities were the priority rather than a pawn in a game of political greed played by local, regional, and international powers.



Indigenous Peoples Solidarity

Canada's Timeline Toward Adoption and Implementation of UNDRIP as a Legislative Framework

By an IPS team member

We are getting closer.

1985 (32 years ago): a working group, including indigenous peoples from around the world, begin the onerous task of drafting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

13 September, 2007 (10 years ago): the United Nations adopted the UNDRIP. Canada joins New Zealand, USA, and Australia in voting against it: all of them settler-colonial states.

June 2, 2015 (2 years and 6 months ago): after hearing thousands of residential school survivors give accounts of the impact of indigenous residential schools in Canada, the Truth and



IPS team members participate in a rally to support Bill C-262.

Reconciliation Commission issues 94 Calls to Action for all areas of Canadian society. Sixteen of these Calls reference UNDRIP as “the framework for reconciliation.”

April 21, 2016 (1 year and 8 months ago): Cree Member of Parliament Romeo Saganash (QC) introduces private member’s Bill C-262: “An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with UNDRIP.” It reaches its first reading in Parliament.

May 2016 (1 year and 7 months ago): Canada officially removed its objector status to UNDRIP.

July 12, 2016 (1 year and 4 months ago): In a speech to the Assembly of First Nations in Niagara, ON, Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould states that adopting the Declaration into Canadian law is “unworkable.”

April 21, 2017 (9 months ago): CPT Indigenous Peoples Solidarity and Mennonite Church Canada co-lead the Pilgrimage for Indigenous Rights. The walkers cross 600 kilometers of Ontario to Parliament Hill, bringing the message of the importance of UNDRIP and Bill C-262.

June 2017 to present: people across Canada continue to spread the news about UNDRIP and advocate for Bill C-262. They stand as public witness outside Liberal Members of Parliament offices, send postcards to their MPs (28,000 of them), write letters, hold information events, walk even more kilometers in major cities, and phone and visit MPs.

November 21 (6 days ago as of this writing): To the surprise of many observers, Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould announces the Liberal government’s support for Bill C-262. While we celebrate this development, we also recognize the need for concerned Canadians to remain vigilant in ensuring the Bill passes 2nd reading, which starts Dec. 5.

The goal of this campaign effort, named “Walk the Talk of Reconciliation with Bill C-262,” is to bring awareness of Bill C-262 as a way forward to reconciliation with our Indigenous hosts



Indigenous Peoples Solidarity

of this land, and to encourage all MPs to support Bill C-262: the Indigenous Human Rights Act. We are getting closer to our goal. To this end, CPTers (and many others) are visiting, phoning and writing to their Member of Parliament. Doug Pritchard (former Co-Director of CPT) wrote to his MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Toronto):

Hi Nathaniel,

First I want to congratulate your government for its November 20th announcement in favor of Bill C-262. At the “Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Symposium,” Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould stated that “with the direction and leadership of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, our government will support Bill C-262. The Bill acknowledges the application of the UN Declaration in Canada, and calls for the alignment of the laws of Canada with the UN Declaration.”

In my previous work as Co-Director of Christian Peacemaker Teams, I spent many months in indigenous communities across Canada learning of their struggles over land rights, cultural destruction, and racism. I came to understand from them how important it is to their communities and to ours to honor the treaties and to respect the rights of indigenous peoples. One of the most disturbing and recurring nightmares that I have to this day comes from my time spent in Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church, New Brunswick) in 2000 when Canadian police, fisheries officers, and local fishers repeatedly attacked Miqmaq lobster fishers from land, sea and air. I hope we never see that kind of violence against indigenous peoples again. Passing Bill C-262 would be an important step in that direction.

I urge you to vote in favor of this bill. Please confirm that you will do so.

Doug Pritchard

Ontario Government Exposed for Willful Negligence of Mercury Poisoning

By an IPS team member



Water samples from Wabigoon Lake and Dryden Mill.

This fall, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario released a scathing report on the government’s handling of mercury contamination in the English-Wabigoon River System. In it, the Commissioner stated that “the Ontario government declined to take action for decades, largely ignoring the suffering of the Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong peoples. Over and over, the Ontario government chose to do nothing. It chose not to remove the sediment, not to investigate in more detail, not to monitor whether mercury levels were indeed declining. In other words, it chose to allow the ongoing poisoning of the communities” (ECO 2017, p.111).

In November, the *Toronto Star* exposed a confidential report commissioned by the current Dryden mill owner, Domtar, and prepared by an environmental consulting firm in 2016. The report revealed that the Ontario government knew decades ago that the mill site was



contaminated with mercury, and likely still is.

This has come as disturbing news to people in Grassy Narrows. As our partner and environmental health coordinator Judy Da Silva stated in the *Globe and Mail*: “They’ve known all along and they just played with us. They don’t view our lives as being valuable.”

Chief Simon Fobister told the *Toronto Star*: “For decades I have been seeking justice for my people for mercury poisoning, searching for answers, searching for help. Never once was I told that mercury poison is still under the mill, right next to our river. I was told over and over that the mill site was cleaned up and that the problem ended in the ’70s. I now see that was a deception and my people have paid the price with their health.”

While the government has begun taking the first steps towards remediating the river, the people who have been poisoned continue to suffer and remain without adequate support. Grassy Narrows is calling for a Mercury Home and Treatment Center in the community on par with the one in Minamata Japan as well as fairer compensation to survivors of mercury poisoning.

We echo the Environment Commissioner’s statement that “it is time for environmental justice to be part of the Ontario [and Canadian] government’s pursuit of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples” (ECO, 2017, p. 142). Add your voice to the demand for environmental justice for Grassy Narrows: <http://freegrassy.net/mercuryhome/>



Into the Night Sea

Michael Himlie, CPT Full-time Corps

As a CPTer on Lesbos, I worked on the Night Watch, monitoring vessels in the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece, and awaiting refugees to arrive on the Greek shore in the night. While the other Night Watch volunteers are just as intimately focused on the care, rights, and well-being of the refugees crossing as I am, these issues were hardly ever discussed as we sat through the night together. Typically

the conversations consisted of the number of refugees crossing, the conditions of Moria (the official detention center), where boats need to land or where the smugglers launch them. Never do we talk about refugees as individuals. Perhaps this is a coping mechanism for some of the Night Watch volunteers who have been through many arrivals, some of them traumatic. I still look into the night sea and view individual lives on the other side.

When I look into the Aegean night sea between midnight and morning, I am almost always tired, and as the weather turns unfriendly, I’m rather cold. Through the binoculars I see the glimmering lights of the Turkish coast and a few vessels: cargo, coast guard, fishing boats, and maybe some rubber dinghies carrying refugees. Monitoring the patterns and actions of the coast guard boats gives us a good idea of whether there is a refugee boat that the coast guard is harassing, illegally pushing back to Turkey or picking up. Meanwhile, in the back of my mind, I am thinking: “oh what I would do for a cup of coffee.”



However, the night on the Turkish coast, from the stories of refugees, is vastly contrary to mine on the Greek side, and far more horrifying. Refugees pay smugglers thousands of Euros each to cross just fifteen kilometers of water. They have no guarantee that they will make it to EU soil. Usually the boat is meant to hold only fifteen people on a river, not 70 or more people in open water. If they are lucky, ahead of them lies a detention center with strict and changing policies for asylum case procedures. But they do not know this.

Looking into the Aegean night sea from Turkey as a refugee is looking into a death-defying journey. Parents look into the night sea as they prepare to risk their own and their children's lives simply in search of a home that is not being bombed. Unaccompanied minors look into the night sea, dreaming of a life that is not filled with war, terror and death. Behind them is a long trail of tears, the deaths of family and friends, lost homes, and somewhere way back, a life that perhaps, at one point, was thriving and good.

The parallel story of a refugee and myself looking across the Aegean night sea at one another, a world apart, has gotten me thinking. We look at each other with vastly different pasts, and a radically different present. I came to the night sea from the United States, a country that has most likely played a large role in their displacement and trauma. I came to Greece in an airplane and a massive luxury ferry that only cost a few Euros. The refugees on the other side have fled from war in their home country, and now are being told they are illegal—that they do not belong. Despite this, these same countries, the ones who played a role in their misfortune, have the resources, ability, and moral duty to help, but probably will not. A 1,000 Euro ride across the sea risking death, to then be placed in a detention center where basic human rights are not met, is for many the best option.

That is why, when I look into the night sea, into the eyes of our sisters and brothers on the other side, I must look with purpose. Often what we look for is the unsteady light of a cell phone shining off the reflective material of a life-jacket. This is the only way to spot a refugee boat. The boats are never lit, giving them a greater chance not being seen by the Frontex* ships, but it is more dangerous. Then comes the faint sounds of voices from the still dark sea. The arrival to shore brings the chaos of trying to treat those who need first aid, calming the children and hoping that the police and military who arrive to take the new arrivals to Moria will not respond to the arrivals with violence. Right now, there is not much justice when it comes to caring for the rights of refugees, but somewhere between me and the refugees on the other side, there is potential for peace. We just have to keep looking for the light.

*Frontex is a militarized security agency contracted by European Union to provide surveillance of its external borders, often leading to the capsizing of the boats and peoples' deaths.



Occupied Childhood

By a Palestine team member

I am standing halfway up the hill, staring down at the towering checkpoint. Its metal bars create a cage of control, penetrating the landscape of a once thriving neighborhood. My eyes are drawn to a small section at the far end where four young boys are forced to sit on the ground, hands tied and backs against the wall. I would find out later they are only eight, nine, or ten years old. They are four of six (so far) boys, ambushed minutes earlier by the Israeli military in the streets of Palestinian controlled HI. The other two have already been taken to the police station for interrogation. They were all grabbed, forced to the ground with soldiers' knees in their necks, hands twisted behind their backs, pulled by the shirts, arms, necks, hands, and shoulders to the places they sit now. They wait.



Over the next two hours, twelve more would be added to their number: ten children and two young adults. Eventually they would all be shoved into the small metal cage at the end of the checkpoint, most of them forced to sit on the ground while soldiers kicked and laughed at them. They would then be taken, without a parent or guardian present, to the police station for several hours, where they would be interrogated, beaten, threatened by soldiers and settlers, and eventually released.

Children under occupation in al-Khalil (Hebron) daily face the threat of arbitrary detainment and arrest, which remains a tactic of collective punishment and restriction of movement by the Israeli forces. CPT frequently witnesses children being taken from their homes, from the streets, as well as from incidents such as clashes, where Israeli forces advance into Palestinian controlled areas and ambush and arrest several children at once. The physical and psychological violence that children experience under these circumstances, as well as their treatment within the Israeli military court system, contribute to the systematic violations and discrimination that is a constant piece of their daily lives. The children are frequently handcuffed, blindfolded, and forced to squat on the ground, as well as intimidated during interrogations with shouting, being placed in dark rooms, threats toward their physical safety, threats toward family members, and other verbal abuse. A study published in October 2017 by Military Court Watch states that in 60 cases of child detainment and arrest in 2017, 92% had their hands tied, 77% were blindfolded, and 62% experienced physical abuse (MCW). According to a joint report released by Addameer, 125 children were arrested across Palestine in the month of October 2017 alone, while 500 - 700 children are prosecuted in the Israeli military court system each year (DCI-P).

Occupation continues to have both a daily and a long-lasting impact on children across Palestine. To advocate for their rights, consider supporting campaigns such No Way to Treat a Child, and find other ways to work for rights and freedom for all Palestinians.

This article is adapted from the section *Children Under Occupation* in a six month incident report created by CPT on life under occupation in al-Khalil. Be sure to read the full report upon its release in the coming weeks.

For video footage of the arrests described above, and testimony from one of the boys that was taken, please see this link on CPT Palestine's youtube channel: <https://tinyurl.com/cpt-palestine>.

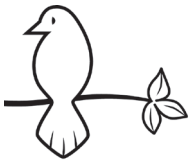


Oscar Macias and Maria Doralba Valbuena, “La Gata”, singing songs about their struggles as victims of violence in Colombia.
 Photo: Caldwell Manners

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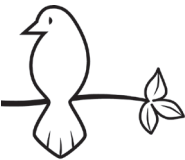


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