

INTERFAITH PEACE-BUILDERS



Building **PEACE** through Personal Experience

March 26, 2010

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Dear Friends,

I participated in the Interfaith Peace-Builders' 32nd delegation in November of last year. Since that time, I have been caught up in a whirlwind of action and education. After the delegation ended, I stayed here in the West Bank to document and support the Palestinian popular resistance. **I have joined the joint struggle against the wall and settlements**, a nonviolent popular movement that started village by village out of the necessity for defending rights, land, and dignity.

The opportunity that IFPB offered me was possible because of the donations from people like you. **I am writing today to ask you to donate to Interfaith Peace-Builders so that others may also join me in this important work.**

My journey began in October when a last-minute call to IFPB landed me a spot on the delegation. For years I knew I needed to get back to the region, for years I felt that as a conscious Jew I needed to see for myself what was happening. As an independent journalist I felt pulled to come and support the struggle. As an activist and organizer I felt called to dialogue with other grassroots activists, share skills, and show solidarity.

I was raised in a Sephardic Jewish family. My grandparents were from Turkey and Greece. I went to Jewish day school, Jewish summer camp, celebrated holidays, had a Bat Mitzvah, and visited Israel at age 16 on a Jewish arts and culture tour. My family was not Zionist, but Zionism was pervasive in my education. I knew nothing of Palestine, not even enough to latch onto the terrible myths that I would later learn about the place and people. My education as far as this would not progress until recently, when I joined the Interfaith Peace-Builders delegation.

The groups and communities that IFPB meets with are dedicated to the idea of nonviolent resistance to the occupation. Along with the pain of destruction and loss, love of humanity and yearning for justice is the common thread that ran through all of our meetings. The Popular Committees that organize demonstrations and actions against the wall and settlements in many Palestinian villages particularly inspired me. Following the delegation I was welcomed to stay in *Bil'in*, one of the communities that has called for creative nonviolent action against the theft of their land. We recently celebrated the fifth anniversary of their struggle and the return of a portion of their land as Israel is finally moving the apartheid wall farther from the village.

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I have been doing media and technical support since I moved to *Bil'in*. I am also asked to be present as an international observer during raids on the village. These raids generally happen at night. **The military enters the village to arrest and harass people; sometimes an international presence helps lessen their violence.** The work is exhausting and means working odd hours. If the army invades the village at 3 am, I work into the morning to write reports, edit video, and send out pictures.

I recently visited a young boy in the hospital whose skull was fractured when he was shot in the head by a rubber bullet during a weekly demonstration in *Nabi Saleh*, a village north of Ramallah. This is part of joint struggle: Palestinians, Israelis, and Internationals standing together on the front lines, reporting on the situations we see on a daily basis, and showing solidarity through small acts like visiting the hospital.

When I am tired I draw strength from those around me and everyone supporting me spiritually and emotionally back home. Home is in the mountains of California; I am an independent media journalist doing what I would call indigenous solidarity media. The occupation here is unique to Palestine/Israel, but it is still amazing to see the similarities; how people are kept apart, kept in fear, controlled and manipulated. As it is in indigenous North America, so it is also in Palestine. There is no way to truly understand the situation unless you see it for yourself on the ground. IFPB gave me the opportunity to do this. **Through the connections I made during the delegation I have continued to work with some of the same activists that we met in the Fall.**

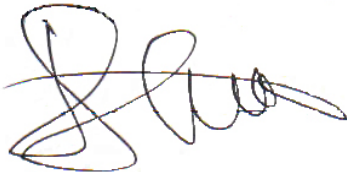
IFPB helped fund part of my trip and tries to do so for other active people. The opportunity they gave me has also strengthened the joint struggle in Palestine/Israel. I will leave behind some of my skills and bring new ways of resisting nonviolently home to my community. By connecting people internationally, we learn and strengthen all of our struggles against oppression.

It is the support of those of you who believe in this type of on-the-ground learning that makes such work possible. I thank each of you who have supported Interfaith Peace-Builders for the opportunity you gave me and many others. **I encourage anyone who is able, to dig deep and give a further donation for this important cause.**

Please support the vital work of Interfaith Peace-Builders. Your contribution will show your solidarity with the joint struggle in Israel/Palestine and simultaneously build our own movement in North America.

Only together will we break down the walls that divide us. Please join me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stormy Staats', written in a cursive style.

Stormy Staats
Interfaith Peace-Builders Delegate
Delegation 32 (November 2009)

PS - Consider making a monthly contribution through IFPB's *Hour-a-Month Program*. See the enclosed newsletter for more details. Your sustained support can make all the difference!