

A Trip Around Jerusalem Settlements CPT November 2002 Delegation

We came to this country with an understanding that said Israel (and Israelis), fearful for their existence, were pursuing a policy of occupation that was both unjust and a breeding ground for more violence. Our first days here showed that many Israelis – even rabbis – were not happy with government policy, and all we met assured us that most Israelis did not know the facts.

Our trip with Naama from Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), told us those facts that most Israeli's did not know. Naama used the image of a prison: the Palestinian lands are a prison with the Israeli settlements as watch towers and the roads as walls. We saw those roads, which are for Israelis only, cutting communities in half, eating up land and making communication impossible. And we saw not only massive settlements built since 1993, but large hilltops labeled as being settlements, not yet built upon. Naama told us that Israeli's can get permits to build on 500% of their land (that is, a five story building) while Palestinians may only build on 25% of their land - land that can be confiscated. The city has demolition orders on up to 1000 Arab residential buildings.

The policy, ultimately, is to have small widespread populations, unable to move between areas in an independent Palestine in name only - in other words, the Bantustan solution. The difference between the political right and moderate is that the moderate wants to provide industry (owned by settlers) to create a livelihood for Palestinian workers, thereby avoiding the kind of economic unrest that plagued South Africa.

This analysis might have seemed Leftist propaganda except for the chilling fact that the plans and maps are on file and available for anyone to see (this is, after all, a democracy). But most citizens do not look or care. They accept the government security analysis as the reason for every governmental act. Thus, the suicide bombers are in effect, making the Israeli government's work easier. So it is true that the government is trying to insure the safety of Israel, but it is doing so at the known abrogation of human rights – a cost that governments may accept, but decent people everywhere – Israeli, Palestinians, Americans included, will reject.