

Address of the Committee for Resistance Against the Wall on

Receiving the Carl von Ossietzky Medal

In the Brlin International Cultural Center

In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate

Abdullah Abu Rahma
Coordinator of the Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements

Sunday, November 7, 2008

Heads of the Board of Trustees of the International League of Human Rights,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We would like to thank you on behalf of the Palestinian people, of the people of the village of Bil'in and our Popular Committee Against the Wall and the Settlements, for your confidence in us and choice of the Committee and our Israeli anarchist partners in the struggle for the Carl von Ossietzky Medal of 2008. This honor holds a special meaning to us as it coincides with the twenty-first anniversary of the start of the Intifada among all Palestinians in resistance to the occupation in 1987, as well as with the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Ladies and Gentleman,

The oppression that the Israeli occupation is inflicting on our people, including killings, arrests, stands in the way to achieve peace in our region. There is no peace with human rights violations. Recently, the level of Israeli attacks and oppression have increased. Over the past two months, during the olive harvest, Israeli settlers ferociously attacked Palestinian villages. These settlers know what the olive harvest means to Palestinian farmers economically, socially and politically. So, they attacked the villages, beating farmers, burning fields, and uprooting trees. Israeli settlements in the West Bank constitute a major obstacle in the path of peace, as they separate population centers and destroy geographical contiguity. These settlements are linked by a racist road network that runs 312 kilometers and inhibit Palestinian movement. There are 608 checkpoints and roadblocks between Palestinian towns and villages, forcing Palestinians to look for alternative routes to get to work, visit family or access medical services. Such alternative

routes are usually very dangerous, and considerably much longer than regular routes, thus costing Palestinians time, effort and money.

Additionally, the Apartheid Wall, which runs 770 kilometers, annexes 12.6% of the West Bank and expropriates the most important aquifers and some of the richest agricultural land. The Apartheid Wall also prevents access to the holy places for Muslims and Christians. The Apartheid Wall combined with the Israeli settlements not only violate international law and constitute war crimes, they also destroy Palestinian economy and the fabric of the Palestinian society.

The village of Bil'in has been, like 129 other villages in Palestine, subject to the cancer of the apartheid wall, which has cut us off from 57.5% of our land, including land planted with olive trees and fruit. The Israeli occupation authorities have been threatening us with land confiscation, and have been building homes for settlers on our land. However, we have been protesting loudly and rising up for the past four years, including children and young men and women, with the participation of our friends around the world, especially from international solidarity groups, the Israeli peace movements and the Anarchists Against the Wall.

We have been resisting the construction of the racist wall with all the peaceful means we have, building on lessons learned from the First Intifada, and trying to be innovative and creative in our actions to get the message through and keep up the momentum. At the same time, we have been subject to the worst and most violent methods of repression by Israeli soldiers, who used diverse means to stop us and tried out new weapons on us, leading to the 1000 injuries. Many of the injured continue to suffer physical disabilities. The Israeli army has arrested sixty young activists, burned our fields, uprooted trees, attacked our homes, and imposed blockades and curfews, preventing people from reaching their work, in addition to other forms of collective punishment.

In one of our events, which I remember well, we learned that Israeli soldiers planned to uproot olive trees from village land on the other side of the wall. After we met to discuss the matter, we went, along with a number of international and Israeli peace activists, early to the fields before the arrival of bulldozers and chained ourselves to olive trees. We succeeded in demonstrating the historically close relationship between us and our land and trees. We succeeded peacefully. The opposite was true of the Israeli soldiers, who violently beat us and arrested a number of us. This is but one example of the hundreds of popular protests we have carried out.

In 1993, after the signing of the Oslo agreement, we had some hope that there might be a just and comprehensive solution to our plight. However, the Israeli authorities soon dimmed any hopes of

peace with its accelerated settlement building and creating facts on the ground policies. We realize that the road to peace is long and full of obstacles. We also know that peace starts here with us. Our experience in Bil'in is a model for joint struggle and coexistence. Peace is not made by one party to the struggle without the other. We strongly believe that those who will make peace are those Palestinians and Israelis who resist side to side in Bil'in, Jayyous and other Palestinian villages for equal rights for all. Peace and coexistence starts with us and our joint struggle.

Dear friends,

We greatly value your vote of confidence in us and our partners "Anarchists Against the Wall" by giving us this Medal. With your support we will continue our joint peaceful resistance to defend our lands and our rights. We promise that we will save no effort to share our unique experience with others, solidifying the peaceful resistance to the Israeli occupation. We are confident that we will realize our rights sooner than later.

Thank you again and may God be with you.

Abdullah Abu Rahma - Coordinator of the Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements