

CRISIS IN THE JORDAN VALLEY AND SOUTH HEBRON HILLS
February 14, 2021
ENGLISH TRANSCRIPT

במרחק נגיעה



מצב חירום

בבקעת הירדן ובדרום הר חברון

מיפגש זום מיוחד

יום א 14.2 בשעה 20.00

**CRISIS IN THE JORDAN VALLEY AND
SOUTH HEBRON HILLS**

Zoom event: Sun Feb 14 @8pm Israel time

בהשתתפות:

עיתונאית הארץ: עמירה הס

פעילות זכויות אדם בבקעת הירדן: דפנה בנאי ורחל אפק

פעילת שלום בחברון ובדרום הרי חברון: הרבנית לאה שקדיאל

לוחמים לשלום: יאיר בונזל

Haaretz Correspondent – Amira Hass

**Human Rights Activists in the Jordan Valley – Daphne Banai
and Rachel Afek**

Peace activist and rabanit – Leah Shakdiel

Combatants for Peace – Yair Buntzel

Simultaneous translation to English will be available



מאזינים

רוצים עד הכיבוד ולשקט ארצות אדם
היה זה המאזינים של הארץ והארץ
אף פעולה לא תהיה רק על ידי הארץ והארץ

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- ***Thank you*** to Tal Haran for translation to English
- ***Thank you*** to the transcribers of the original recording: Orit Dekel, Pitzy Steiner, Ronit Dahan Ramati

Pitzzy

Good evening / good morning or good afternoon: Depending where you are at this minute in the world.

My name is Pitzzy Steiner, a long-time member of MachsomWatch, Women Against the Occupation and for Human Rights.

I will be your host this evening.

We thank you for joining us for this special zoom event highlighting the crisis in the Jordan Valley and in the South Hebron Hills.

The media, except for Haaretz newspaper and Mekomit, has been lacking in all that relates to recent ongoing events in the Jordan Valley and in the South Hebron Hills.

In Hebrew the words ELEM (silence) and ALIMUT (violence) come from the same root.

As the silence grows deeper, violence increases.

We, the MachsomWatch volunteers feel that the crisis we are witnessing had to be shared with a larger audience and so we are glad you are here with us.

WE ask that you put your microphones on **MUTE** and that you submit your questions on the chat. Translation to English is available.

Please click on the **Interpretation emoji** at the bottom of your screen.

We ask that for Hebrew you choose CHINESE because that's how we figured out to make translation services work for us.

Many of you will want to offer to help us. Please be patient as we will give details about this at the end of the presentation.

Before we start, we want to make sure that you know about our **MachsomWatch website**. There you will find video recordings of previous zoom events and tons of important up to date information.

We are fortunate to have an impressive list of speakers this evening and we thank them for joining us.

First, I would like to invite **Rachel Afek**, a long time MW volunteer. Rachel helps lead several impressive projects.

The first is the **SEA DAYS Project** which brings Palestinian children and their mothers for a joyful day at the sea.

Recently she helped start a kindergarten for children in the Jordan Valley.

Rachel is totally committed to the people of the JV and we will kick off the evening by asking Rachel to read recent reflections she has written about her experiences in the JV.

After Rachel we will silently display recent images from the Jordan Valley.

RACHEL AFEK, MachsomWatch

Good Evening.

For me, the Jordan Valley is about immense skies, the dance of birds, the ever changing colors of the hills, the sheep, the chiming bells and of course the people.

Wide smiles, working through an endlessly long day of hard tasks, complete harmony between nature and humanity.

Chickens, pigeons, goats, sheep and children are all in a crazy mix.

And when all this beauty is disturbed by tanks, fences and cement markers indicating firing zones, you see the desecration of nature and the desecration of life. And in the eyes of the people you see doom.

I wrote the following posts about all of this.

1 .

Imagine me getting onto a truck with a long orange fork, recruiting others who are just like me, adding some thugs, and of course taking out a hidden weapon, and heading out in the morning to a place ***I-don't-give-a damn-about*** and surround it on all sides, and start shoveling and destroying

But first I would take **the people** who live there and shove them out of the way so that they don't disturb me.

And the **herd of animals** I would chase helter skelter to the wind.

At the end of the day I would give them the option to move to a place called "*The Hoopoe Bird's Nails*" or some other place with another name that does not exist on the map, and I would tell them that "if you don't go there, I'll come back tomorrow and drag you there"

Then I would leave and go home to rest.

I would leave Hansel and Gretel there so that they could let me know if anything happens.

If it happens, I would come back with my equipment and complete the job.

DO YOU THINK I COULD GET AWAY WITH ALL OF THIS without anyone in the media breathing a word?

Can you imagine that this is how it would play out?

Imagine that this is happening here, on the our side, the side which is close to the sea.

An entire village and all its residents, all the children, all the women, all their belongings thrown out of their homes, being sent to nowhere, and the world remains silent.

And the world continues without a burp.

Yesterday, the media was occupied for half a day, what was it about?

They discussed a politician who said things unpleasant to the Zionist ear, they bemoaned another general who did not survive the political race.

No one talked about Israeli evacuations and demolitions of an entire village, of all that it was and, of everything that made it a village.

Once upon a time there was a village. Now it is gone.

2.

This is the fourth week that the army, the Civil Administration and their equipment arrived at Palestinian villages in the Jordan Valley, simply destroying everything.

Three days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday) are devoted to demolitions.

They destroyed **Homsa** for the glory of the state of Israel.

They demolished the animal pens belonging to all the families in **Burj**.

They destroyed 400 dunam of trees near **Tubas**.

They demolished buildings in a settlement in the Jordan Valley called **Yarza**.

They are on their way back to **Homsa** at this very moment, determined to destroy what may have been quickly rebuilt.

They destroyed agricultural water pools in **Jiftlik**.

What have you been up to?

Maybe you are busy following Bibi's trial, or maybe the Corona?

I don't where you are.

Where are we?

Complete helplessness and there are no signs of protests to be heard.

PITZY:

We invite you now to view some of our recent photos of what are seeing in the Jordan Valley.

Photographs by Daphne Banai, Rachel Afek, Hagit Bak, Michal Tzadik, Judy Auerbach and local photographers.

You'll see demolitions, and more demolitions, and the families next to what was their home just an hour ago, and the bulldozers and activists too.

We are honored and pleased that Haaretz senior journalist **Amira Hass** is able to join us and we thank her for being here.

In her writing Amira expresses what we feel and care about so deeply.

Amira's reporting is precise, concise, accurate and authentic and we feel that her articles alone are worthy of a subscription to Haaretz Newspaper.

We don't need to say more than share these headlines of some her articles this month to explain why we felt that we needed her here tonight to give us an overview of the crisis.

- **The Silence of the Israeli Media's Occupation Lambs**
- **Israel Destroys and Seizes Structures in Khirbet Humsa, Leaving Over 30 Palestinian Minors Without a Roof**

- Why Is the Israeli Military Exercising in These Palestinian Villages, for the First Time in 7 Years?

Amira, please.

Amira Hass, Haaretz Correspondent

Good evening, everyone, and thanks for inviting me.

I apologize in advance for having to leave for another Zoom meeting, so I'll listen to the recording later.

In your notice you wrote rightly, this is now a state of emergency, the pace in which Israel demolishes and confiscates and expels and issues demolition orders etc.

This pace has accelerated now, let's not forget, for Palestinians it has been ongoing over 50 years in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Every act of demolition and eviction we see now is based on old practices, used previously, all legal as it were, every practice has a military edict that bore it, a commander who signed, military lawyers who approved it and judges and Attorney Generals too.

So we can see every present demolition as an added piece of a large mosaic which we need to define at long last, give it a name. Every demolition is like a new, fresh geological layer, under which lie layers of the practices of yesteryear.

So I'll list the methods, certainly not complete, since 1967:

What we see in Humsa as well as the southern West Bank and Masaffer Yatta, are huge areas declared firing zones, inhabitable, where people may not develop, construct, graze there, all kinds of prohibitions.

We know that for decades they didn't really hold, no more than 20% of the area was used for army maneuvers, but a senior officer privately admitted that firing zones are meant to prevent the growth of 'wild weeds'. Namely Palestinian communities.

Israel has also used other methods, declared nature reserves without asking Palestinians about their ties to the area, their needs inside nature reserves.

Areas are declared 'state land', based on decisions and tricks invented by Israel to pretend that an area does not belong to a Palestinian village but is rather 'state land'. And we know what that means: land for Jews.

From the first moment after the 1967 occupation, Palestinian planning authorities were deprived of their authority, planning is done only by the Jews of the Civil Administration so no wonder Jews plan for Jews, not for West Bank Palestinians.

In the 1970s, in order to reduce or prevent Palestinian movement, sheep were confiscated, even killed out of helicopters. Flocks were shot when trying to reach would-be firing zones, sheep were confiscated and their release cost a fortune.

Villages were demolished and emptied, like Hadidiya, which Daphne knows so well, and Nabi Samauil west of Jerusalem, the village of Susya whose inhabitants were expelled and their homes demolished after decades or even centuries before the founding of the State, all in addition to prohibitions such as

connecting to water supply, to power, paving internal roads, since Israel ruled that all of these communities, dozens of them, are unrecognized, and therefore people are not allowed to build, make master plans, so any addition is forbidden. Add to this all the violence, by settler-colonists, and army, and helpless local authorities facing violent settler-colonists who take over Palestinian land backed by the occupation. It's endless.

The Oslo Accords added to all this the division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, and let's remember the separation fences near the settler-colonies and around them and along the west edge of the West Bank.

The list is long, like archeological layers on top of one another.

In the 1990s, when there was still an Israeli peace camp, supporting the founding of a Palestinian state, and thus not far from the Palestinian position headed by Arafat and the PLO who decided they were ready for peace with Israel in return for a Palestinian state on just 22% of historical Palestine.

Many of them believe to this day that Rabin wanted peace based on a state.

Other states supported peace and Oslo, believed in this direction, of a Palestinian state on some of the land, Palestinian and independent.

Clearly this state would lie within the Palestinian territory occupied in '67 that we now call the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

This area, prior to the Madrid talks and Oslo was really Palestinian, with small Israeli enclaves, the colonies, understanding that the state would be here, and the tiny Israeli enclaves would have to move, be dismantled, return to Israel proper.

Palestinians believed, as did the big Israeli peace camp, and internationally, that talks were taking place, real negotiations. But what happened since the early 1990s and fast, was that under the guise of 'peace talks' Israel already practiced the methods I listed here, and added more expropriation, and gradually, not so slowly, Palestinian space became Israeli, with Palestinian enclaves.

These are called Area A, with a bit of B around them, enclaves supposedly under the Palestinian Authority that has all the responsibility but no authority to develop economy, has no space for development, has only responsibility.

So Israel was rid of its responsibility as occupier, its responsibility for the occupied population, handed it over to the PA which has no authority, cannot care for its population, and so Israel cleared for itself about 60% or more of the West Bank.

Anyone driving in the West Bank now sees a typically Israeli space, with occasional Palestinian villages as decoration, not even marked on road signs.

This crowding of Palestinians into enclaves is the main vector that I see now in Israeli policy and that's why we see it as a state of emergency, accelerated crowding of the Palestinians, their eviction from Area C that's most of the West Bank, into Areas A and B.

This tendency began in the early 1990s when people did not want to see it.

We can witness it in demolitions back then. People told me that in the Palestinian Jordan Valley, when some hut was demolished in Furush Beit Dajan, a villager asked a soldier, "where shall I go?" the answer was "Go to Arafat", that's what they called Area A.

Namely, soldiers got the hang of it from their superiors but it was disguised because the Palestinians still expected a state throughout the Territories.

What we now call a state of emergency is a total lack of shame on Israel's part, no fear that anyone in the world would stop it.

Finally, note that all the methods I listed earlier, or ones like them also based on regulations and edicts and legalities, are used inside Israel proper, expropriating lands from Palestinians and those who were not expelled from the country are crowded into ever-denser enclaves.

Go to Umm Al Fahm, Nazareth, any Palestinian town and see this.

In Oslo, the Palestinians headed by Arafat gave Israel a gift. A chance to give up its colonialist traits in return for a Palestinian state on 22% of the land. That's no sacrifice for Israel and a big one for Palestinians.

But it was the one chance to begin creating some kind of path for a different, new future for the two peoples. We can now see every day, at every demolition and expulsion from what is called a firing zone, that Israel is the one that rejected the gift, and insists on remaining a colonialist entity.

Thank you.

Pitzzy

Many of you met MachsomWatch activist **Daphne Banai** on our zoom event in December which was an in-depth presentation of the situation in the Jordan Valley. A video of this zoom is available on our website in Hebrew and in English.

Daphne will share with us the current crisis situation there and the efforts being made to help the Palestinians there.

Daphne Banai, MachsomWatch

I've been active for years in the Occupied Territories, mostly in the Jordan Valley.

I've seen many demolitions. Hundreds.

My heart breaks every time.

People's suffering facing the rubble that was their home is indescribable, their total despair, helplessness, not knowing where they'll sleep tonight.

Even more indescribable for anyone whose shelter is safe.

That's why I want to speak about the people.

Israel has greatly escalated its demolitions and confiscations in the Pales. Jordan Valley.

Hundreds of families are now exposed to the freezing winter nights in Yarza, Al Bourj, Al Malih, Wad Al Ahmar, Jiftlik, Fasail and more.

Most demolitions are repeats – people managed somehow to revive a tent or sheep pen, and Israel demolishes again. Again. Until no strength is left to rebuild or even remove the rubble. I want to speak about two such families.

You've heard about Humsa, I won't repeat the details.

The entire village, 11 families, was destroyed.

One day, Feb. 3, I came as the 3rd demolition was ongoing.

The truck and crane were on the track, workers were running around taking apart tents and sheep pens, trampling lambs as they did so.

The men stood helplessly watching how what had been home was taken apart.

Not a word was uttered, no one faced the destroyers. Looks said it all. Anger, hate.

About 10 little ones, under 6-years old, stood staring. So small and already understanding what the Jews were doing.

At the side, amidst a pile of her belongings - blankets, clothes, eating utensils –stood Aishe and cursed everything, the Jews, God, heaven.

I neared her, tried talking to her, but she wouldn't. Pushed me away.

In my last visit we got friendly so I thought naively that we were on the same side.

But truthfully, we're not. With all my empathy, I live in a safe, warm home, living with the very people who are now destroying her life. I was wordless.

The previous day someone gave me coloring books and felt pens.

I gave these to all the children who immediately sat down to color them in.

They even laughed doing this.

Ruti who came with me approached Aishe's daughter sitting behind the rubble, weeping, while nursing her 2-month-old baby.

Ruti took her 2-year-old daughter, tickled and made her laugh, then brought her to her angry grandma and gave her over.

Slowly, as she hugged her grandchild, Aishe's face calmed and tears streamed down her face.

We sat next to her, wordlessly holding her hand.

In the meantime, with the soldiers still nearby, the men, with Israeli activists, began to collect remains and build a shelter for the animals.

Later that evening the PA brought 2 tents.

Later still, at night, the war criminals returned and ruined the new tents...

Another family, a different place.

On August 24, 2020, the army demolished dwelling tents, sheep pens and kitchen of the Naware family of Fasail.

When we got there the next day, we found a struck-down family.

The mother, Maryam, a toothless old woman, can hardly walk, bent over her cane, half-blind, a diabetic. The entire family is diabetic and not functioning.

The father told us loudly how he loves Israel, raised his 6 children to love Israel, how he worked faithfully in the settlements, always loved Israel. Always.

So why? What wrong has he done?

Since then, his tent has been re-erected twice, with our and the PA's help.

Every time it's demolished. 3 demolitions in 3 months.

There's no more strength even to remove the rubble, the torn covers that were home.

And they live amidst the rubble.

Every few days army people come and with a patronizing smile tell them that if they dare rebuild, everything else will be confiscated as well.

Their son and his wife sleep in an abandoned car, their Red Cross tent lets in water.

Old Maryam sits amidst the remains of her home and can't see them, her blind eyes tearful.

This "old woman" is all of 52. This is what such a hard life under occupation, not only the occupation, this arid land, does to people.

PITZY

Our next speaker, our only male-speaker, is Yair Bunzel.

He is a member of ‘Combatants for Peace’, very active in the Palestinian Jordan Valley along with his fellow members, with Taayush and others.

When everyone spoke about demolitions and re-building,

I take it ‘re-building’ refers to Yair and his friends.

He tries to support the rights of shepherds facing settler-colonist harassments.

Yair will tell us what he experienced there lately.

We met in an Arabic study group, where he was absent for 2 sessions apparently on special leave in order to sleep over in the Valley and keep an eye on their day’s re-building.

YAIR BUNZEL, Combatants for Peace

I wish I could be there to protect them from the ruinous Israeli army.

Some of our helplessness is coming and witnessing the destruction, when we do, often we're not present during the demolition...with the shepherds, and we have only our phones to photograph and no power to stop the demolition, whether we're there or not.

As the speakers before me said, this system tirelessly invents new methods to reduce the habitat and practice what Israeli ears have trouble hearing, but is openly ethnic cleansing in these parts of the Jordan Valley and South Hebron Hills.

Indeed, it's creeping ethnic cleansing, not the kind we know from certain European wars, but by international standards and facts on the ground the obvious purpose is to remove Palestinians and bring in their stead more and more Jewish settler-colonists.

Since these are distant areas without infrastructure, and living is harsh, it's hard even now to persuade Israelis to live there as was done in large and medium settler-colonies of the West Bank.

So here the method is different: erect outposts that are not only violations of international law, but even of Israeli law. It's convenient: no more than a person or couple, living on some hill, they come first with some caravan or trailer, bring a flock of cows or sheep and take over the grazing grounds around, that are

the habitat and grazing grounds of Palestinian shepherd communities.

The firing zones in which Palestinians grazed are fought over as in the Wild West.

It's simply a battle over real estate. Since precipitation there is minimal, vast grazing grounds are needed.

After the flock has grazed it needs new grounds, grass won't grow here for a long time, until the next rains, so vast areas are needed.

This is how the battle is waged.

The communities have no other means of making a living.

They sow very little in minimal privately-owned land, leased from landowners in Palestinian towns.

90% of the shepherds' income is from livestock, so they need vast grazing grounds.

Then the settler-colonists erect these 'lone ranches', which sound romantic, as if coming to 'make the desert bloom,' but their flock too needs grazing grounds, so they push out the Palestinian shepherds from land they had used for generations.

Not much is needed: suffice it for a settler-colonist to tell a Palestinian shepherd: "Go away. Now you have to tighten up, stay only north of this road, east of that hill".

Most settler-colonists are armed and violent, and the Israeli army supports them.

If the shepherds resist, the army is summoned and chases the shepherds away.

The demolitions we saw here, as Amira said, are only one means.

There are others: surveillance, arrests, confiscations and nightly 'visits'.

The army comes to these communities at nightfall, now it's early, even 6 p.m. The army comes, at night, everyone's asleep.

The soldiers search as if the Palestinians hide explosives...

Note that these communities are politically different elsewhere in the West Bank and Hebron, where a political struggle is waged, and friction with settler-colonists.

(Bad enough, as we know about places where Israel vandalizes Palestinians).

But in the Pal. Jordan Valley it's harassment of a weakened population even without the occupation, before the 'lone ranchers' came, before the shepherds are chased away from their grazing grounds, and with weather and a life-style that are so harsh in themselves, the pressure by settler-colonists and army breaks many.

Here's an example of another community, not Humsa that was demolished but one around Makhoul that underwent thorough

demolition last month after which half of the people did not return. They left, moved to towns where they are struggling to survive and live differently.

It's a system that uses various means, all backed up by laws and tricks, and when not, the army turns a blind eye, providing the 'lone ranchers' with water we pay for with our taxes.

The demolitions in Humsa are part of a well-planned campaign that gets constantly more sophisticated and innovative.

I could talk about this a lot, but I want to spare you and leave time for questions. I only want to say that our work in Humsa began with demolitions begun in November, a few Israelis coming there and working with the Palestinians.

What we do in these communities, especially in the northern Jordan Valley, (while others are active in the southern part and in the South Hebron Hills), is mostly to accompany shepherds to their grazing grounds.

It's also the answer to the question in view of the difficulty of the situation what can so few Israeli supporters do to reduce this process even a little, which can only be described as creeping ethnic cleansing.

The answer is that one can come and be with the shepherds.

Some of these activities are hard physically and not for everyone, but there are things that nearly everyone can do, come and be with the families, with the women who don't go with the flocks, just sit and talk with them.

Some people there do speak Hebrew, not the women, some don't wish to speak the occupier's language, others simply don't know it.

Naturally English is not spoken, but communication is always possible.

All our presence there is important and effective.

Whether with the shepherds or not, our solidarity, projects like the one that Rachel began, helping to found a kindergarten, supporting the population with things that we don't need and mainly to be there and show that not all Israelis wear uniforms and carry guns like the settler-colonists...

If there is any hope or wish to change things, not sink into despair where it's so easy to say "nothing can be done, it's all just horrible" and get back to our lives, one can make contact with our speakers, on Facebook, websites, phones, organizations, whether MachsomWatch, or Taayush or Combatants for Peace, even without being a member.

Just come, see reality live, show solidarity and then go tell what you saw, do practical things as much as we can, that's better than not doing a thing.

Thanks.

PITZY

Now let's move to the South Hebron Hills and to **Leah Shakdiel**, a cherished and respected MachsomWatch member.

Leah lives in Yeruham in the Negev, many members of her extended family founded the Quedumim Settlement.

Leah is a member of the Orthodox Oz LeShalom movement.

An important judicial ruling is named in her name: the ruling that permits women to be members of religious councils.

Since 2005 Leah has been a member of MachsomWatch. She is also a founder of "Merkam Ezori," a group of Yeruham residents who work with the residents of Rahma, an unrecognized Bedouin town near Yeruham. The group works to have this town recognized by the state of Israel.

The group also promotes economic and education projects with Rahma.

Human rights are bread and butter for Leah, whose whole life is dedicated to this through the lens of a religious world view.

In recent years she passed rabbinical certification and these days she can offer Halakhic rulings.

We invite Leah to tell us a bit about the Crisis in the South Hebron Hills. Leah, please.

Rabbi LEAH SHAKDIEL, MachsomWatch

Hello, everyone. I have seen here some of my friends from *Oz Veshalom*, the Jewish religious peace movement founded right after the settler movement in the 1970s, even before “Peace Now”.

I seen activists here from organizations called *Tag Meir* that is also Jewish-religious, Rabbis for Human Rights, and “Roots-Juzur”, I’ve seen their delegation at Gush Etzyon (settler-colonist bloc), *Sha’alu Shlom Yerushalayim* active in matters of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan.

Our heart breaks, religious Jews in Israel, witnessing the interpretation of the Torah in a way that is unacceptable, blasphemous, dragging the State of Israel into this reality.

It’s horrifying. I see it, as the Prophet Isaiah called it, Sodom and Gomorah, all these harsh things that were said back then as if about our own time.

It’s hard when some of my own kids are settler-colonists, when our daughter-in-law is a member of the regional council in the Jordan Valley.

She took an outstanding feminist step enabling women to get elected, unlike before.

When I asked her “What about the other communities in the Jordan Valley?”

She said, “You know you and I don’t agree about everything”.
People here have asked, what are the veteran settler-colonists doing?

Nothing. Sitting aside. They don’t need to.
The job is done for the evil ones as well.

The veteran settler-colonists don’t need to run after Palestinians.
Others are doing this dirty work.

Here’s an event in a recent vigil MachsomWatch shift in the South Hebron Hills.

I’ll describe only one of many.

Two weeks ago, we went to a village called A-Zwaidin. Along road 60.

Nearby is a settler-colony, Carmel and behind that lies Umm Al Kheir, up the road behind Carmel through Carmel’s industrial zone one passes a village called Ka’abna, and then A-Zwaidin, and then a dirt track, and finally behind the village proper, lie the shepherd encampments.

It’s on the verge of the Judean Desert.

This is Area C, under total Israeli control.

The only people the State of Israel allows here are its settler-colonists, they’re the ones getting services, others can’t connect to water or power grids.

You know that since 1967 Israel's water company Mekorot appropriated all water from the hill range aquifer etc.

These people...

We drive in the middle of the desert and suddenly see a Palestine flag waving above some structure of a schoolhouse.

Who provides school services inside Area C?

Its residents are supposed to receive them from the sovereign power and not the Jewish Israeli settler-colonists breaking international law.

So this school is serviced by the Palestinian Authority.

Israel is so enlightened, we "allow" the PA to run a school there. First it was a tent, now it's built up, there's even preparation for gardening. We met the principal, an educated man. He is a villager of A-Zwaidin, attended university in Hebron, then Al Quds, employs 3 male teachers, 2 women teachers, a secretary on half-time, and a guard.

Very very nice, except for one thing: there's a demolition order. We saw it. In other words, any day this school may be demolished by Israel.

To show us that the State of Israel not only threatens, it also carries out, he escorted us to the side of the school fence, to a water hole and mosque, built as part of this compound.

These were demolished. Days earlier. We photographed the rubble. Namely, a demolition order issued by our State

Is not a hollow threat, it can really happen.

This is a school attended by 50 pupils from all shepherd communities in the area. Inside the proper village is a local school. This one, further down, is for the children of the area.

Does the State of Israel allow the PA to provide transport for those pupils?

No way. We know this from Tawane.

They arrive on foot in any weather, or... It's complicated, under the harsh conditions already described here.

Kindergarten is also required but they haven't managed it yet.

The struggle against demolition orders is helped by Palestinian lawyers struggling against settler-colonies and the Separation Fence, and the PA helps this community struggle against the demolition orders.

You can figure out how much of a chance such struggle has.

Who is the stronger side that can decide the total erasure of the other.

I want to tell you what warmed our hearts on that difficult morning, when winter-break kept pupils out of school, only the principal and guard were there, suddenly out of nowhere a group of youngsters and some children arrived, Palestinian volunteers

who came with pails of paint. One is an artist, and had some model on her phone and she began to draw this beautiful image of schoolchildren around a large tree.

Everyone there came to paint the walls.

The Arabic word we learned was *Sumuud*, holding on to home, to land, future dreams.

For kids to have a better future, more chance to thrive in society and life.

These people don't want to go on living as they did in the past.

They would be glad to shape their lives in their own way, their own culture, attain economic security, more security in general, give their kids a better future.

Clearly this is what they want, they're human, they're parents who love their kids, and want this progress. The fact is that Fatmah, a social worker, organized this group is the sister of another Palestinian activist, Nasser of Palestinian Susya.

Fatmah, with her broad smile and love of life she projects on her volunteers.

They come and paint, regardless if a demolition order is at hand.

This meant for us that it's not we, Jewish Israelis, who invent struggle or hope.

No! We come here to express our support of the local struggle for life, of the holding on to life, to a better future, of the

educated working for the weakened in Palestinian society in order to get ahead.

Not far from there, in Hashem A-Daraj, is a kindergarten run by a Palestinian woman, and Mira Balaban, of our southern MachsomWatch group, has been organizing support for this kindergarten for years.

We feel that we join the activity of the local activists.

Activists in Tawane struggle against...

Just now one of them was suddenly arrested and freed on bail with a horrific fine, and all the demolitions that are carried out there all the time.

We join the area's activists. This is our way to stay sane.

This is my way to look in the mirror and say, "What'll I tell my grandkids?"

If we believe in God, it's my way to say, when I go, and God asks me, "Leah, what did you do when all those horrors took place?" I'll be able to humbly say, "I don't think I did enough, but I can tell you that here and there I walked a ways."

That's it.

PITZY

Leah, you illuminated things for us...

Your words are heart-warming after all we've heard here.

For still there is some kind of local activity and support and maybe a bit of light in all the darkness we've seen here.

Thank you very much.

Thank you for joining us this evening.

Thank you to our Zoom Team, including Karin Lindner and Ronny Perlman who organized this event in one week.

Thank you to Aviva Hay who is the behind the scenes producer for our events.

Thank you to Manal Hassan for her excellent translations to English.

We wish you good health, take care of yourselves and of each other, and **stay involved**.

And last but not least, HAPPY VALENTINES DAY, to all of you who are celebrating love today.