



# EYEWITNESS PALESTINE: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

The 13th annual InDnegev music festival is held in the Naqab desert, where Israel continues its apartheid regime of illegally claiming more stretches of land, while ethnically cleansing the region of its indigenous Palestinian Bedouin residents. Home demolitions are all too familiar and common for Palestinians and continue to be carried out in Israel's explicit violation of international law, as they voraciously steal more and more land from the Palestinians. In the area of the Naqab desert where the festival will take place, is a Palestinian Bedouin town known as, Al Araqib, and it has been repeatedly destroyed by Israeli forces well over 150 times. Not only are the Bedouin residents faced with ongoing demolitions and displacement, but their villages are unrecognized and therefore, denied basic services of running water and electricity. The resilient residents continue to rebuild their homes among these ongoing challenges.

Israel continues to plan for the perpetuation of displacement of Palestinians in this area of the Naqab. There is no just solution to this displacement. Rather, the Bedouin communities will be displaced to refugee camps. Meanwhile, the InDnegev festival is claimed to be founded on a mission to “give thanks to the community surrounding this beautiful phenomenon” - a direct quote from the InDnegev’s website. This is a prime example of how tourism is used to both ethnically cleanse indigenous Palestinians from their land, while simultaneously making an attempt in whitewashing Israel’s war crimes in the name of peace, love, culture, and art. To add to the irony, Bedouins of the region are allowed to apply to work at this festival, which seemingly adds to the idea that this festival is enlightened and peaceful. However, even though the Palestinians of the Naqab technically have Israeli citizenship, they are still denied basic rights to travel through the region freely, making this work “opportunity” rare and actually quite demeaning.

Furthermore, InDnegev is being represented as an unforgettably life-changing experience, due to its “*asylum-city*” allegedly as “a place where creativity, freedom, and happiness are well-known companions.” The paradox here being that Israeli bulldozers have previously ravaged the land, suppressed, terrorized, and displaced its indigenous communities, and obliterated its rich history of Palestinian culture. Life for Palestinians bears a much different reality than the story that is typically told through the Israeli-favored narrative that we hear on much of the news today.

During my recent travels through Palestine as a delegate with **Eyewitness Palestine**, even as a Palestinian-American with an obvious American accent and passport, I witnessed firsthand the profiling and racism Israel carries out against those of Arab descent. Upon landing in Tel Aviv and entering through passport control to be granted access into the country, I was immediately profiled and asked what my father’s and grandfather’s name are and where they were born. Given my background is Palestinian, and my family hailing from Gaza, this did not grant me the fast track into the country.

**I was held at Israel passport control for 5 hours.** My passport was taken from me, and I was taken in for questioning. Israeli security asked me repeatedly the names of my father and grandfather, where they were born, when they left, where the rest of my family is in the Middle East, the name and ages of all my family members, if I support terrorist organizations, and so on. They asked me the same questions over and over again, as if to provoke me to say the wrong thing. I was asked to hand over my phone so they could look through all of my emails to ensure I am not a threat to the country, and threatened to deny my entry if I didn’t comply or if they found anything suspicious. Thankfully, I was eventually allowed to enter the country, but the profiling I experienced did not end there.

Traveling through checkpoints is an intense experience. Passing through the Palestinian territories, it is not required to pass through security. However, entering into Israeli territory is a different story. Most of the stops we made through to Israeli-controlled territory, our Palestinian guide and bus driver were taken off the bus and made to walk through a metal detector. Fully armed military guards would then walk through the bus. In one circumstance, I was immediately profiled and asked for my passport. The guard flipped through every single page, and I felt scared that I would be taken off the bus and questioned. We were lucky in that we got to carry on in our journeys and weren’t held at these checkpoints for hours, as Israel will routinely do to Palestinians, preventing them from the ability to hold a steady job, to travel freely, even to marry as they please due to the de-humanizing restrictions Israel places on Palestinians’ freedom.

It was one of these bus rides through the desert where my delegation and I witnessed a raid of a Bedouin village as we were passing through the area. My stomach knotted to see this with my own eyes, on such a seemingly casual drive through the desert. I knew this was a common occurrence, but to actually see it happen, without there being anything we could do, nor any sort of legal consequence against Israel for illegally raiding and demolishing a village, is just sickening.

**Israel is not progressive.** It is not a cultural epicenter of the world just waiting to be experienced. Israel is a blatantly racist, settler colonial state built from a strict ruling class, intent on eradicating, exploiting, and displacing the Palestinian indigenous inhabitants, clutching onto its power and control under the facade of the “war on terror,” and its right to defend itself. Israel grows continually desperate to whitewash its war crimes as its transparency as an apartheid state becomes more distinguished.

We are at a powerfully raw moment in time where we can actually witness this systematic displacement and exploitation of an indigenous culture taking place. We each have the ability and duty to speak out against the injustices occurring in the world. Spending time in Palestine and understanding firsthand how much their rights as humans are oppressed, it became clearer to me that as Americans, we have an outstandingly influential voice.

**Among all of the extreme life challenges the Palestinians are enduring, more persistent is their amazing hospitality, generosity, and joy of life. They always danced with us, they fed us amazing food in abundance, they told us their stories. One stable element among all of this sharing was that the Palestinians do not see themselves as victims. Rather, they just want their basic rights to be restored.**

They want their children to stop being arrested, they want to to travel without restriction, their home and land rights to be honored and restored to them and to build homes without them being demolished, to cultivate their land as they once did, to simply enjoy life. There is an untold story here that needs a voice. It’s time to revolutionize this situation, and experience the power of human freedom together.

**Israeli tourism sector plays a critical role in oppressing Palestinians and erasing their culture from the region. Common or popular tourism facilitates advancing colonization and gentrification of indigenous Palestinian culture. As the freedom of movement for Palestinians is explicitly controlled and denied, our delegation came to Palestine to hear their stories firsthand, to come back to the states and share the reality of what is really like in the region.**

**- Jamilla Hashem**

Jamilla is a Palestinian-American writer who is passionate about her Palestinian roots. When she’s not busy writing about Palestine, making traditional hummus, Arabic coffee, or practicing tatreez, she is likely to be found playing with goats. To read more of her eyewitness accounts during her time in Palestine, as well as to learn how to travel ethically to Palestine visit: [eyewitnesspalestine.org/delegation68](http://eyewitnesspalestine.org/delegation68) She is available to reach via email for further information at [jamillaahashem@gmail.com](mailto:jamillaahashem@gmail.com)

<h3>Direct Action Toward Nuclear Abolition</h3> <p>On April 4, 2018, the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 entered the U.S. Navy Nuclear Submarine base in King’s Bay, GA and performed a traditional Plowshares action. Guided by lines from Scripture urging people to “<i>beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks,</i>” they prayed, reflected and then <b>symbolically disarmed</b> the Trident nuclear submarine site.</p> <p>The Catholic anti-nuke activists were found guilty in late October <b>of three felonies and a misdemeanor each, including trespassing and defacing federal government property.</b> The group faces up to 25 years in prison. The result was a foregone conclusion when Judge Woods issued her long-awaited orders regarding testimony allowed in court. <b>She did not allow</b> testimony about the illegality of nuclear weapons, the necessity of civil disobedience, or individual motivations and personal faith. According to Bill Quigley, who represented Elizabeth McAlister during the trial, sentences for the Plowshares activists will be handed down in 60 to 90 days.</p> <p><i>“The activists have told the truth, despite the cost. They have taken their actions, despite the risk,”</i> said Mr. Quigley, in a statement made outside the courthouse immediately following the verdict. <i>“The nuclear weapons submarines at Kings Bay have 3,800 times as much destructive power as the weapons that were used at Hiroshima,”</i> Mr. Quigly said. And so “<i>after two years of prayer...they came together and took action to preach the word: the word of life, the word of love, the word of peace. And they are paying a huge price for it.</i>”</p>	<p><b>All of the defendants will be free to return home before sentencing, with the exception of Jesuit Father Steve Kelly, who has refused bail.</b> Kelly referred to himself in a recent letter as “<i>a tenuous voice in the wilderness.</i>” He further explained that he is among the <b>wilderness of the incarcerated, “two and a quarter million folks comprising the human warehouses in the empire.”</b> Steve has been imprisoned in the Glynn County jail since April 4, 2018.</p> <p>The Kings Bay is home port to <b>six nuclear armed Trident ballistic missile submarines</b> with the combined explosive power of over <b>1825 Hiroshima bombs.</b> The group illegally entered three areas of the naval base, including an administrative building, an installation that features a model of the Trident D5 missile, and bunkers that store nuclear weapons. The 7 hung crime scene tape and signs with anti-nuke slogans including “<b>The ultimate logic of Trident is omnicide</b>” and <b>hammered the missile model.</b> Referring to the banner, Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971, said the banner “is exactly right.” In an October 18 endorsement, he called their actions “necessary to avert a much greater evil.”</p> <p>The Kings Bay Plowshares 7 includes <b>Martha Hennessy</b>, granddaughter of Dorothy Day and a member of the New York Catholic Worker community; <b>Carmen Trotta</b>, also a New York Catholic Worker; <b>Elizabeth McAlister</b>, a member of the Jonah House community in Baltimore and wife of the activist Philip Berrigan; <b>Steve Kelly</b>, S.J.; <b>Patrick O’Neill</b>, a founder of the Fr. Charlie Mulholland Catholic Worker House in Garner, N.C.; <b>Mark Colville</b>, a member of the Amistad Catholic Worker in</p>	<p>New Haven, Conn; and <b>Clare Grady</b> of Ithaca, N.Y., who participated in her first Plowshares action in 1983.</p> <p>The seven defendants in everyday life practice nonviolence while <b>serving people</b> who are often the least cared for in our society as members of the Catholic Worker movement and Jonah House in Baltimore. They have risked their lives, safety and health in <b>numerous actions</b> of civil disobedience. When imprisoned, they write and speak of the cruel abuse of human beings and <b>the racist, primitive nature of the United States prison-industrial complex.</b> They’ve also chosen to <b>visit or live in war zones</b>, providing witness on behalf of people trapped under bombardment. They <b>live simply</b>, share resources and strive to help build a better world. The defendants have clarified that the U.S. nuclear weapon arsenal <b>robs resources</b> desperately needed for food, shelter, health care and education. <i>The New York Times</i> notes if we could reach a total nuclear weapons ban that would amount to <b>\$43 billion</b> each year on weapons, delivery systems and upgrades</p> <p>The activists remain committed to pressing on with this legal battle. <i>“It’s not over yet,”</i> said Martha Hennessy. <i>“The efficiency of the state can never be underestimated, yet, we proceed in humility. The weapons are still there, the treaties are being knocked down one after the next, but we are called to keep trying. We will do this together. We have no other choice.”</i></p> <p>Thanks to Kathy Kelly who co-coordinates Voices for Creative Nonviolence and Colleen Dulle</p> <p><b>dulle@americamedia.org</b></p>
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