

Moving Stories: 201

Responding to the crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory: February 2017

Transitional Justice

The long term objective of Transitional justice work is the transformation of the conflict through a challenge to community mind sets and narratives. In addition to Christian Aid's support for core and project work in IOPT, Christian Aid and Christian Aid Ireland have joined up with Ulster University's Transitional Justice Institute in Northern Ireland to help leaders learn how to help grassroots initiatives deal with the past. Partners reported great gains from this which will strengthen their existing work. This transformation justice work has reached 120,000 Jewish Israelis annually and through the work with CA's programme, Zochrot, stands to reach far greater numbers in a more profound way.

Focus for the IOPT programme going forward

Throughout 2016, the Middle East Team have been undergoing a strategy review process. This review has changed ways of working, bringing all work in IOPT together under one Country Programme (replacing the previous thematic approach, which had work in IOPT across three different programmes). This should allow them to look more holistically at the issues on the ground, and the main causes of poverty; discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel; the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip; weak and divided Palestinian governance and ongoing Palestinian displacement.

CA believes that Middle East peace requires a long-term, just and peaceful solution that ends the occupation and guarantees a viable future for both Palestinians and Israelis. Viability includes the protection of rights and security for all and requires a radical shift from the current political stalemate to a position where Palestinians,

Israelis and the international community create the political will to take the bold steps necessary to create a genuine peace. Therefore, their ongoing programming will focus on four main areas:

- Improved knowledge and application of human rights
- Tackling violence and building peace
- Building and strengthening livelihoods and economic empowerment
- Developing preparedness to enable more effective response to emergencies

Over the next six months, they will work closely with partners to refine and nuance strategy into an effective, operational approach, developing specific plans and indicators to track the progress of the programme's work and successes.

Despite having a strong portfolio of partners doing excellent work, they are also keen to be dynamic and innovative, and continue to be responsive to the situation and context in which they are working. To this end, they will focus on:

- Refining advocacy strategy and approaches to complement and support the new strategic direction
- Strengthening programme approaches in areas such as preparedness, economics and non-traditional livelihoods

Balfour Project Film.

Following last month's article, we were made aware of a film that is worth watching '[Britain in Palestine 1917 - 1948](#)'. There is also a companion Guide, and a well-resourced study guide. Some of you may wish to read more on this subject by

looking at the McMahon-Hussein correspondence of 1915 in which the UK promised the Arabs an independent land including Palestine. Do see [this paper on the promise](#).

There is a petition on recognising the state of Palestine brought by the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group. Follow this link if you wish to sign the petition

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/174181>

Eyewitness

Eyewitness is a short film about EAPPI and the role it takes as an international presence in occupied Palestine. It shows accompaniment in action. <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/international-work/eappi>

Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) update

PARC's current work aims to help sustain the Palestinian agricultural sector through protecting, reproducing and promoting local seeds among farmers and other target groups in the Palestinian society. These seeds have developed characteristics and mechanisms to thrive in their environment (eg. tolerant to drought or a particular type of soil and climate). This form of farming has increasingly come under threat from a combination of factors, including manmade climate change, the incursion onto Palestinian land by Israeli settlements, and agricultural companies' marketing of hybrid varieties to farmers, in addition to competition from Israeli-branded produce.

Working with farmers like Qasem, PARC focus on:

- Reproduction of and distribution of local seeds to local farmers, redistributing what is cultivated to expand the circle of experience, which grows year on year

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- Holding training sessions for farmers (male and female) on local seeds production and providing farmers with extension services
- Facilitating exchange visits among farmers, seed companies and governmental representatives
- Holding annual farmer seminars for local seeds protection and reproduction – last year 150 farmers, researchers, unis, local seeds companies, government and non-government representatives discussed best practices in the field of local seeds protection, development and implementation
- Research with institutions (Bethlehem University) to help identify most appropriate environmental location and best cultivation practices
- Looking to institutionalize/formalise the local seed protection and development program at a national level
- Working with the Minister of the Environment and the Palestinian Environment Protection Authority to produce an educational film about climate change in Palestine and how to mitigate some of the impacts of this, distributing that at schools.
- Developing market access work together with PARC and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) - training women's agricultural cooperatives on managing their cooperative, food production and quality control. Also linking well-known suppliers with these producers both locally and internationally. Communities now provide produce such as sesame seeds, vine leaves, pickles and thyme.