

'Inspiration'

by Emma Clare Nutbrown Hughes, URC pilgrims to IOPT in 2019



The 2019 URC educational trip to Israel and The Occupied Palestinian Territories was an intense, thought-provoking and moving time. We travelled not just as socio-political observers but as Christians, exploring how our faith might guide our response to what we saw. We saw and learnt about conflict, inequality and injustice. The trip was also a response to the Palestinian Church leaders' invitation - issued to Christians across the world - to visit and experience their everyday lives.

Nidal abu Zuluf is the manager of a joint advocacy initiative between the YMCA and YWCA in Bethlehem. The initiative aims to give hope to young people. Many don't feel safe, have no jobs. They want to live in dignity.

Nidal's programmes help young people develop leadership skills. About 200 students are invited each year from Europe for placements. This enables young locals to share with and learn from each other and others.

Nidal said that one million Palestinians have been in prison. He was himself in prison for two years. He was also tortured.

'As Christians we should stand by the poor, marginalised and displaced. Don't support us because we are Palestinians, but because we are a people in misery, because of the conditions imposed by others.'

Nidal insisted that Palestinians wanted liberation for the Israelis too, for them to stop violating international law.

'We love them,' he told us. "It's hard for me but we must love them. We are all born in the image of God and are equal in dignity. This is what Christianity means.'

It was called an educational trip and it certainly was. It was inspiring. I am delighted to belong to a church willing to learn, to explore and engage with justice.

Please contact your Synod Office, or Kevin, if you want to learn more about the URC's education trip to IOPT. Thank you for brilliant support for *Commitment for Life*.

