

Session 4

Challenges for young people of the region



Discussion

What job would you like to do when you are older?

In Palestine, it is very difficult for people to get a job and so unemployment is high. The occupation means that it can be difficult for Palestinian businesses to make any money. The separation barrier and its checkpoints means it takes longer to move goods and services in and out of the West Bank. Israeli settlements mean that it is more difficult for Palestinians to access land that is good for farming. Gaza is under blockade, which means that the Israeli military controls everything that goes in or out of it.

If someone can't get a job, they are likely to live in poverty. Although many people would rather stay in their home country, lots of young Palestinians are deciding to move abroad when they are older because life is so difficult in Palestine. They go to study at universities in other countries and then get jobs there. This means that lots of talented young people are leaving Palestine.

Some people decide to stay because they want to try and improve life for other people in Palestine. They may work for charities or try to raise awareness online or by talking to people who visit from other countries.



Make a difference

Buying Palestinian goods can help to support people in Palestine. One of the most popular things produced in Palestine is olive oil. With your family or your youth group, try making traditional hummus with Palestinian olive oil.

- 1 can of chickpeas
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tbsp tahini
- Salt
- Palestinian olive oil



- 1) Empty the chickpeas into a saucepan and bring to a simmer.
- 2) Once warm, drain and rinse the chickpeas and add to a blender with the lemon juice, garlic, tahini, and salt. Blend until smooth. Add more water if it looks too thick.
- 3) Drizzle with lots of Palestinian olive oil and eat with warm pitta bread.



Housing is another challenge that faces Palestinians. The people who govern Israel and Palestine both claim that the land referred to as the Occupied Palestinian Territory should belong to them. Because of this, the Israeli government will sometimes say that houses that Palestinian families are living in should belong to Israelis. The Palestinian families will then be evicted and their homes will either be given to Israeli citizens or demolished to make space for Israeli building projects.

Discussion

Israel and Palestine both claim that the land belongs to them. What does the word 'home' mean to you? What makes a house or an area a 'home'? Talk about how it feels to come home after you've been away, and how you would feel if you were forced to leave your home.



Israel has national conscription, which means that when anyone turns eighteen years old, they must serve in the army for a set period of time. Both girls and boys must join the army. Girls serve in the army for two years and boys serve in the army for two and a half years. Children grow up with the expectation that they will serve in the army and they spend their time in the army before they go on to college or university.

Because the Palestinian territory is occupied by the Israeli military, the teenagers who are conscripted to the army have to serve there. This may include working at the checkpoints or taking part in military action in Palestinian towns or villages. For many young people, this may be the first time that they have actually come face to face with Palestinians.

Although it is expected that all teenagers will join the army, more and more people are refusing to be conscripted. This is because these young Israelis do not agree with the occupation of Palestine and they do not want to be part of the occupation. It is not easy to refuse though. Because it is the law that everyone must join the army, people who refuse conscription are often sent to prison.

Or, an actor from Israel, tells about his experience of conscription

In Israel everyone goes to the army. No one thinks it's weird or absurd that at 18 you get a gun and that you might kill someone. The army in Israel is a big part of your personality. My parents met in the army. This connection to the army is called a 'battle legacy'. I was medically exempt from going to the army, but my parents insisted and so I volunteered, not for combat, but as a military reporter. I was good at writing, and I got to speak to all sorts of people. I did all sorts of cool stuff. I saw the entirety of the military. But doing that you get the feeling that something is off here. Something is very weird.



One time I joined in a *ma'atsarim* – or arrests, basically. That is going to a Palestinian village where there is intel about a terrorist. I tagged along excitedly, expecting action. We banged on the door of this family. They were half asleep, and the soldiers rushed in and wrecked the house. They could not find the knife they were searching for. The family was screaming. We took a guy from his bed, blindfolded him and took him away. The next day I followed up to find out if they'd found the knife. They told me they got the wrong guy. It was the brother. How twisted is that? Someone comes into your home and kicks you, soldiers with weapons. That kid did nothing wrong. I can only think he goes home and thinks about how much he hates me, all soldiers, all Jews.

That day I realised I should not be here. I have to be on another side of the conflict. I can't be on the "get in the van" side. I can't be on the passive side, like, "I don't care, I'm not looking at it" side. I have to be active, but from another perspective.

Bible link

***"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."* Jeremiah 29:11**

This passage was written to give people hope when they were forced to live in exile in Babylon, a city in a country far from home. Christians believe that there is hope for the future by trusting in Christ.

However, it is not enough to simply trust but do nothing. Jesus helped people directly by healing and teaching and having difficult conversations with people who disagreed with him. What could people do to give people in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory hope for the future?

Prayer

Dear God,

Sometimes the future can be exciting. Sometimes the future can be scary. We trust that you will be with us, whatever happens tomorrow and in years to come.

We pray for people who are worried about what will happen when they grow up. Give courage to people who must make difficult decisions about whether they can stay in the place they grew up. Give courage to people who stand up for peace, even if they will suffer for it. Give us the courage to help build peace and end poverty. Amen

