

AMNESTY NEWS

www.amnesty-volunteer.org/uk/southampton-city

June 2008



Palestine and Israel: Tom Patton

Tom Patton of WCC's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) spoke at May's meeting.

Background: In September 2000, the second *intifada*-an Arabic word meaning "shaking off"-was triggered after Ariel Sharon, accompanied by more than a thousand heavily-armed Israeli policemen, took a walk on the Temple Mount, which is the Muslim site of the Golden Mosque. This was described as "a supremely provocative act". The next day, worshippers leaving the mosque were met by a massive police presence. They began throwing stones, the police charged and within minutes were firing rubber bullets, ie steel bullets with a veneer of rubber that are frequently fatal. In addition police snipers were shooting and killing people. The ferocity of the Israeli response provoked an explosion of violence throughout the Occupied Territories. Out of that situation the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem called for help-for peace-loving people from around the world to share and witness to their experience. The World Council of Churches responded to that call by setting up the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme. There are three aspects to the Programme: protection by presence; solidarity and advocacy. In Britain & Ireland the Programme is coordinated by Quakers, who are recruiting now for 2009!

**Group Meeting
Monday June 9th 2008**

CHINA

**Update and Appeal Writing
Members of Southampton
China Sub Group**

**Avenue St Andrew's
United Reformed Church
The Avenue, Southampton
7.30 pm
ALL WELCOME**

In 2002, Israel began to build the separation barrier, in some places eg around Bethlehem it is a wall the height of two double-deck buses; elsewhere it is simply a wide barrier made up of fences and trenches, a tarred roadway, and razor-wire.

Tom's experience: he lived in Jayyous, a village of about 3500 people. The fence runs close to the western edge of the hill on which the village stands. To build it, Israelis uprooted 4,000 olive trees and fruit trees. It is a scar on the landscape, it poisons relations between the peoples of Israel and Palestine, it creates an unhealed wound. The barrier is built on Palestinian land and it separates the people from their wells and 75% of their most productive land.

Cont page 3

AI's VISION

is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards.

AI's MISSION

is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

AI's CORE VALUES

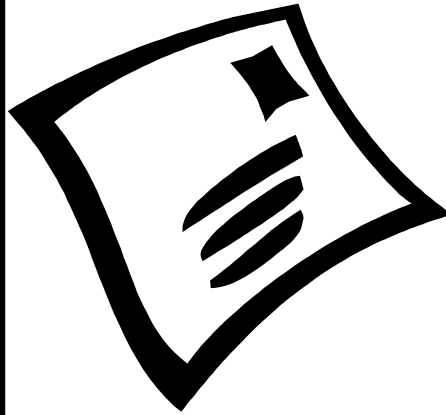
remain those of : international solidarity, effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

Tiananmen Mothers: the quest for justice

The Tiananmen Mothers are a group of around 130 human rights defenders, mainly women, whose children and other close relatives were killed or injured in the military crack-down on pro-democracy demonstrations on 3-4 June 1989. The Group has compiled the names of more than 180 people who were killed and at least 70 injured, although the true number is believed to run into hundreds.

The Tiananmen Mothers regularly call on the Chinese authorities to allow families of the victims to mourn in public, to end persecution of victims and their families, to release all those still imprisoned in connection with the 1989 protests and to implement a full and open inquiry. As a result, they have been subjected to harassment, discrimination and arbitrary detention.

Last year, for the first time, they were allowed to hold a short memorial ceremony near Tiananmen Square.



APPEAL:

Please write, welcoming that some members of the Tiananmen Mothers were allowed to grieve their loved ones in public in 2007, and urging that they be allowed to do so again. Ask the authorities to allow full public debate of the events of 3-4 June 1989, with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice and providing compensation to the victims or their families.

SEND APPEALS TO:

Hu Jintao Guojia Zhuxi
The State Council General
Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China

Or

Her Excellency Mrs Fu Ying
Embassy of the People's
Republic of China
49-51 Portland Place
London W1B 1JL

Letter writing guide

- *Always be polite. This rule is essential and invariable. Your aim is to help, not to relieve your own feelings. Governments don't respond to abusive or condemnatory letters (however well **deserved!**)
- *Always write your letters on the basis that the Government concerned is open to reason and discussion.
- *It is important where possible to stress a country's reputation for moderation and justice, to show respect for its constitution and judicial procedures, and to demonstrate an understanding of current difficulties. This will give you more scope to point out ways in which the human rights situation can be improved.
- *Follow strictly the instructions given by AI.
- *Never use political jargon. Don't give the impression that you are writing because you are ideologically or politically opposed to the government in question. It is far more effective to stress that your concern for human rights is not politically based in any way, but in keeping with basic principles of international law.
- *If appropriate, explain who you are and what you do. It shows your letter is genuine, and that people from varying walks of life are following events in the country concerned.

May Group

Jenny (Chair): Welcomed all to meeting.

Mary (Secretary):

- ◆ **Monthly Action:** Iranian prisoner of conscience, letter signed by Jenny on behalf of the Group.
- ◆ “Skills Share” weekend, 28th, 29th. Travel and accommodation will be paid for.

Report on behalf of Giampaolo (Treasurer) :

- ◆ Currently have £1000 in the bank.
- ◆ Made £360 On Tin Rattle, thanks to all who helped.

- ◆ Proposed we send £400 to AI, NB noted we do not have any planned fund-raising events as Concert has been postponed.

Ann & Mary (China):

- ◆ Wednesday 4th June, 6.00 pm at the Chinese Embassy, Portland Place, London, “Tiananmen Square 19 yrs on”.
- ◆ 7th June, “Letter write” at Borders Book Shop, Southampton.

Cont from page 1

Palestine and Israel and the role of the WCC's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme Tom Patton

This area used to be known as the breadbasket of Palestine. The land is fertile and there is plenty of water in the wells. The farms can produce every kind of fruit and vegetable known to the region. But now, people cannot reach their farms without permission from the Israeli army. Only those granted a permit may cross the barrier through gates which are opened two or three times a day. Permits are issued for a restricted period of time and the army can refuse to issue a permit-without giving any reason. More people are currently being refused permits, and Tom's impression is that permits are being issued for shorter periods of time-in some cases, for a couple of months rather than a year or two years. What is happening at Jayyous is also going on elsewhere in Palestine.

In 1967 Israel occupied the West Bank of the Jordan. Since then, although the Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from colonising occupied territory, Israel has pursued a policy of setting its own people on Palestinian land. Within a mile of Jayyous, on the other side of the barrier, Israel has built one of these settlements-on confiscated land that belonged to farmers of Jayyous. What is happening is that land is being systematically stolen from people whose families have farmed it for generations to be made available to Israelis who live in an illegal “settlement”. There are many stories about devious and dishonest ways in which over the last 25 years people in Jayyous have lost their land.

To Palestinians land is not just their place of work. Last year, when the harvesting was finished, early in the morning families set off to the farm with their picnics. The land is a place in which people take pleasure. There is almost a spiritual connection with the land. One of the previous members of EAPPI accompanied one of the village men whose farm had been confiscated and witnessed his distress: “As we reached the hilltop from where we could see the farm, he got into a state of desperation. He raised his arms and cried out loud, pointing desperately to the ripped up soil. He tumbled among the up-rooted olive trees, pressing the leaves to his face as he ran from one tree to the other.”

Simply by being there members of the EAPPI are able to:

- ◆ protect villages-just being there means that Israelis from the settlements do not invade;
- ◆ help people successfully and efficiently get through the checkpoints; and
- ◆ monitor what happens at the gates, and send reports to the UN and the International Red Cross.

