

Palestinian Lives Matter: A Letter from Mitri Raheb

Dear Friends,

A new wave of political unrest is here. Within the last five weeks, over forty young people from Palestine were killed and over 1100 injured. These are not mere numbers, but young people with faces, names and dreams. Yet, as if their lives do not matter, the Israelis are easing their already loose laws on using arms with a clear message of shoot to kill. For the Israeli government, these young Palestinians are rebels that do not deserve to live. They must be taught a lesson. To add insult to injury, you hear the western politicians talking about Israel's right to defend itself, and stand shamelessly with Israel. Thus, to those international players the lives of Palestinians are worthless while the life of an Israeli is so precious.

This pattern reminds us of how the world viewed the lives of black people under apartheid and how racism against blacks is felt in so many countries around the world. The same applies to indigenous peoples, and the oppressed. The most dangerous thing however, is when young people from those oppressed groups are pushed to the point where they start looking for a life after death but do not believe any more in a life before death that is worth living.

In this context, we have three messages to share:

The first message is to our Jewish Israeli neighbors. This history of the Maccabees, of the so-called first Jewish revolt, and that of Bar Kokhba, teaches us that as long as there is occupation, there will be uprising. Over and over again, young people will rise requesting their freedom and this is their right. The occupation has to end for our sake and for your sake. Enough lives have been wasted.

The second message is to the international community: without justice for Palestine, there will be no peace for Israel. Unless we start seeing the lives of the Palestinians as important as the lives of the Israelis, the bloodshed will continue. Palestinian lives matter.

The third message is to our Palestinian young people: The question is not if we should resist or not, but the most important question is how to resist, and how to resist creatively. We do not want you to die, but to live for Palestine. Through your life you can contribute more to the future of Palestine. We want you to cling to your dreams, even if the occupation wants to steal these dreams from you, and if the whole world ignores your rights. The denial of your life and dignity with all its harshness should be used to propel you to cling to life and not allow anyone to waste it. Your lives matter to God, to us, your community and to those who love justice in this world. Your creative resistance will eventually free Palestine and then you, your families and all Palestinians will enjoy life in abundance.

Salaam,

Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb
President, Bright Stars of Bethlehem