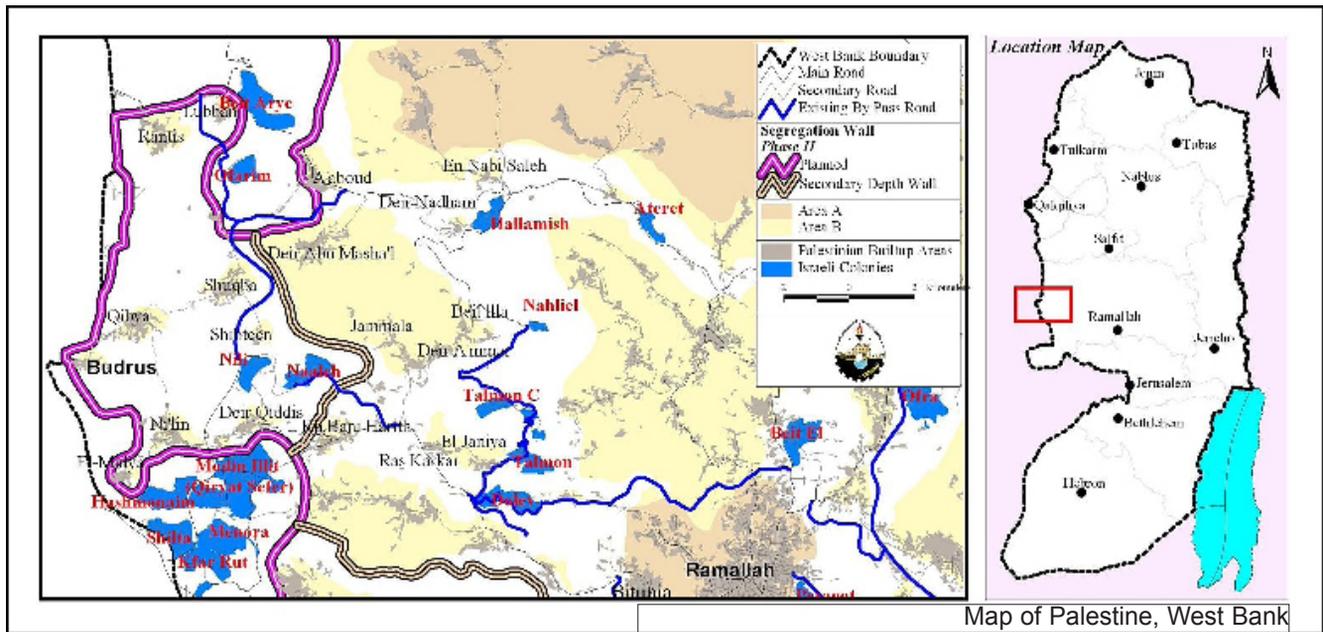


“The Third Intifada”: Nonviolent Resistance Against the Wall in Budrus



Map of Palestine, West Bank

Tal Palter-Palman

Budrus is a small Palestinian village, located northwest of Ramallah, with 1200 residents. In 2002, the Israeli government began to build a Wall in the Palestinian occupied territories that would confiscate 1,000 dunams (around 250 acres) of Budrus’ agricultural land. Additionally, the small village has no higher education system or clinics inside the village, and 80% of the villagers work outside of Budrus. Access to these services has been available in the city of Ramallah. However, the planned route of the Wall will create an enclave surrounding Budrus, and as a result, access to Ramallah will only be available through one gate which will be controlled by the Israeli army. Ran HaCohen writes that, “by locking up the Palestinians and taking land in-between the enclaves, Israel robs them of their future, of a contiguous territory for the Palestinian State promised in President Bush’s roadmap. The Palestinians are thus left with no hope for the future.”

A Third Intifada! But How?

In November 2003, Budrus residents received military orders stating that a portion of their land will be confiscated due to the construction of the Wall. When the construction of the Wall officially started, the residents of Budrus held their first nonviolent demonstration sitting in front of the bulldoz-

ers and confronting the soldiers. In December, Ayed Morrar and other villagers established the Popular Committee against the Wall. First, they formed grassroots committees, including political parties, village councils, youth clubs, and a women’s committee. These committees were organized to represent the needs of the people, to enable grassroots participation, and to exclude no one.

The Popular Committee against the Wall drafted a plan of action: the aim, to achieve freedom and a just peace; with the strategy of nonviolent means to reduce aggression. The tactics and principles were threefold: (1) “We can do it,” which became the main slogan of the movement. (2) Big problems require big efforts and a long-term commitment of the people. (3) The Popular Committee called for a third Intifada against the Wall and for peace. In turn, Budrus residents launched their local struggle and became the leading movement in the struggle against the Wall in Palestine.

There were practical and ethical reasons that led the people of Budrus to adopt the philosophy and strategy of nonviolence. Morrar said that the people of Budrus have been resisting the occupation all their lives and are tired of violence of all kinds; they are tired of seeing their families killed, injured, and jailed, as well as of the deaths of their Israeli neighbors. Morrar writes, “The people of the village of Budrus have chosen nonviolent resistance because we’ve seen enough

blood and believe that violence is the root of fighting, not its solution.” Therefore the use of arms is strictly forbidden. The committee was able to minimize and stop stone-throwing, a well known and common tactic used by youth against the army since the First Intifada.

Additionally, religion and spirituality are generated in the movement in Budrus, though not as a dominate force. Morrar believes that Islam is a vital part of their nonviolent resistance since all religions, including Islam, were initiated to promote peaceful relationships between oneself, between each other, and between one and God. Morrar wrote, “Consider the words of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, who said: ‘Give support to your brother, be he oppressed or oppressor.’ The people replied to Mohammed: ‘We can support the oppressed, but how can we support an oppressor?’ and the prophet answered: ‘By telling him not to oppress. That is to support him.” In this passage, Morrar articulates one of the basic principles of nonviolence, which is the belief that the oppressor is also oppressed and a non-violent struggle will free all people.

An Open Invitation

The decision to use non-violent methods enabled Budrus to invite Israelis and global citizens (commonly referred to as internationals) to join their movement. The villagers continuously emphasized that they are not against Israelis or Jews, but rather against the occupation, and therefore, both Israelis and global participants have answered the call. Ta’ayush, an Arab Jewish Partnership, and the Anarchists Against the Wall

were the main Israeli organizations that participated in the demonstrations in Budrus. Yonatan Pollak, a Jewish Israeli activist from Tel Aviv and one of the leaders of the Anarchist Against the Wall, explains that his role is to support the Palestinian struggle and express that the Wall and the occupation are not carried out in his name. The International Solidarity Movement (ISM), the main international organization that worked in Budrus, brings international activists to be a part of the movement in Palestine and to serve as witnesses to the human rights violations committed by the military. Paul Larudee, a member of the ISM, participated in a demonstration and observed the arrest of some villagers. When the army left, Larudee asked the villagers whether the presence of international activists helped the struggle or only made the sol-

diers act more violently. One of the villagers answered that the presence of international activists decreases the army brutality and this is one of the main reasons that international activists and Israelis are invited.

Finding Power Within

Between November 2003 and March ‘04, the protest activities included sit-ins in front of bulldozers, confronting Israeli soldiers nonviolently, and planting trees. Sit-ins in front of working bulldozers or houses that were assigned for demolition often altered the occupation forces’ work plans for the day or even the rest of the week. Furthermore, villagers and protestors guarded trees that were at risk of being uprooted and planted olive trees to replace the ones which were uprooted. The olive tree represents the attachment to the land as well as a source of life. An old saying asserts that an olive tree will never make one rich, but will never let one go hungry.

“The people of the village of Budrus have chosen nonviolent resistance because we’ve seen enough blood and believe that violence is the root of fighting, not its solution.”

--Ayed Morrar



Graffiti in Beit Sahour. Photo by Tal Palter-Palman

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In other times, the Popular Committee against the Wall decided to organize entire demonstrations consisting only of women. Women are perceived as less violent than men as well as more vulnerable, which makes it tougher for the soldiers to use force and violence legitimately against them. Many nonviolent movements, such as the one in Budrus, used the force of women advantageously. In the beginning of the movement women's participation was not significant, but increasingly women became eager to join the movement. Morrar explained that women did not want to wait at home and cook while their men were becoming heroes; they wanted to contribute and join the movement. Ever since, the women of Budrus showed great courage participating and participating in all the demonstrations of their village as well as resisting alone against the army.

Success

In the nine months of daily nonviolent protests, the soldiers used tear gas, shock grenades, rubber-coated steel bullets, and regular bullets. They injured 300 villagers, arrested 38

for a period between four and eight months, and killed one 17-year-old boy, Hussein Elayyan. Despite the military brutality, the protesters remained nonviolent and demonstrated great courage in continuing their struggle. On May 2004, Ronit Robinson, an Israeli human rights attorney representing Budrus through the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, filed a petition to Israel's High Court of Justice, claiming that there is no legitimate reason for the route of the Wall to divide the village's lands. The petition called for the court to take into consideration the advisory opinion on the Wall written by the International Court of Justice that stated that the wall is illegal. The Israeli High Court decided that the military must change the route of the Wall in Budrus since the principle of balance between Israeli security and Palestinians' rights was not practiced.

On August 1, 2004, the Israeli bulldozers stopped the work on the Wall in Budrus in response to the court decision. Many have argued that Israel's court would never have ruled in favor of Budrus had it not been for the public pressure generated by the nonviolent movement. The Popular Committee against the Wall declared this decision as a big victory that

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Demonstrators walking to the Route of the Wall, January 2004. Photo by Tal Palter-Palman



saved 1,200 dunams of land with 3,000 olive trees from confiscation. Many other West Bank villages have adopted the resistance model of Budrus, the most well-known being the village of Bil'in (see "No to Occupation, Yes to Community," *PeacePower*, Winter 2006). Today, more than 35 villages have established popular committees against the Wall and carry on "The Third Intifada" that the small village of Budrus originally launched.

Such a movement, based on justice, peace, and nonviolence has already proven its ability to force the Israeli government to alter its policies. However, to end the construction of the Wall and the military occupation, the "third non-violent Intifada" must grow consistently among Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals. Numerous cases in the past including the Indian Freedom Movement, the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement, People Power in the Philippines, and the recent Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, have proven that nonviolent movements are capable of toppling the most brutal regimes. Many foresee that a similar movement will be able to end the Israeli military occupation of Palestine and generate a sustainable positive peace that will benefit all the people of this region.