



MEND UK

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What we're up to...

MEND Coordinators/activists visit Ireland

From 7th to 11th October, a MEND Board member, three MEND Regional Coordinators and two female MEND activists visited Ireland on a training package. Iyad Burnat, a renowned Nonviolent activist from the Bil'in village, and four Israeli activists also visited Ireland with them. They were invited by the Nobel Peace Prize winner Mairead Maguire and her NGP, The Peace People, because Irish people believe they are key players in their community in helping the peace process and working for peace. The trip included an introduction to the history of the conflict in Northern Ireland, meetings with local politicians and peace workers, and discussions on aspects of peace building.

New Staff and Volunteers!

We are happy to introduce Hiba Tazziz, our Media & Public Relations Officer, from 1st September. Hiba is an important part of the MEND East Jerusalem office. Ingrid Norman, a volunteer from Sweden, joined us on 16th September, she has played a pivotal role in helping raise funds. Larrissa and Flo (UK), Pietro (France) and Matt (USA) joined October 4th, and Anna (Sweden) and Marcelka (Poland) will join this winter.

ANN offices reopen in Tul Karem, Ramallah and Hebron!

MEND is very glad to announce the re-opening of its Active Nonviolence Network centres in Hebron, Ramallah, and Tul Karem in addition to its centre currently operating in East Jerusalem. The aim is that these centres will become places where the local population can engage in discussions about nonviolence and democracy, participate in workshops and training sessions, and express their experiences of life under occupation through practical alternatives to violence, such as art, participatory video, music and drama. While violence at the hands of the Israeli army has often resulted in a violent response amongst the Palestinian population, the new MEND centres in the West Bank provide a unique opportunity to spread the message that nonviolence is an alternative way of resisting brutality.

International Day of Peace

The 21st September is designated by the United Nations as "International Day of Peace". MEND celebrated the special day in co-operation with The New Generation School in Abu Dis. Many guests were invited, including the Swiss Consul Ms. Monica Hmotz - Kirodz in Tel Aviv and the representative of the Swiss office in the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, Mr. Andre Samandrin. The celebration started with the singing of the Palestinian national anthem. A minute of silence for world peace was then observed, and the school's principals, Mrs. Tri Balata and Mrs. Manal Erekat, welcomed the guests and talked about the International Day of Peace. After the speech, 400 students, both boys and girls, released balloons into the sky as a symbol of peace.

On the 24th of September, MEND joined the House mothers and Service for Peace, an International NGO, to celebrate the International Day of Peace with the children who live in The Lazarus Home for Girls - an orphanage for both boys and girls. The event aimed to demonstrate to thirty children in the orphanage that people still believe in peace, and that as long as they do so, peace is still possible.

What nonviolence means to me

By Suha Waleed Lahlooh in Jenin.

I took my MA in Management at Al Quds University. I was actively involved with the Panorama Center "Saleh Court" project, which aims to realize more justice and equality in Palestinian society. I was also a member of an organization established for jailed women. My experience of being arrested by the Israeli Army in July 2002, while demonstrating against occupation, is evidence of my political activism.

My first involvement with MEND was at a workshop organized in Ramallah in March 2008. When asked how I would like to be involved with MEND, I responded by saying that I would try to organize a training program and workshop about Nonviolence, Human Rights and Human Security, so that I can send a message to neighbours and other NGOs in Jenin.

Nonviolence, for me, means "stop the occupation". I believe Nonviolence is the better way, because we can make peace without violence. Nonviolence is the best way to get what you want, and it comes without blood.

At the time the interview took place, Suha had just returned from Ireland as a MEND representative.

Interview by Taka Nakahara, translation by Nour Shehadeh, Issa Asslan and Fiona Salem.

Interview with Ahlam Helmi Heussein

Ahlam, 24, is one of the core Members in Ramallah, and participated in the summer camps. She has worked at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, contributing to many workshops on nonviolence and human rights.

What is your definition of nonviolence?

It is a means people use to achieve goals without resorting to violence

What motivates you to participate in nonviolence?

In the beginning it was curiosity. I wanted more detailed knowledge of this concept and to see if it was possible to apply nonviolence. The motivation then came to join the foundation (MEND), and I was able to get the answers I had wanted.

What is the degree of understanding of nonviolence amongst the consciousness of Palestinian Youth?

My view is that they interpret it as surrender. This comes from the influence of society and their surroundings. Therefore, I see this influence continuing with new generations.

Do you think non-violence should be developed within the school curriculum?

I support an educational curriculum in schools with nonviolence as a compulsory topic.

How important are the workshops and courses for the young people, especially with the current situation of fanatical partisanship and infighting? Obviously this, in turn, affects their behavior and actions.

The training workshops could bring together various ethnicities. It could also break down barriers between these groups and teach them how to work towards exerting positive influence and the termination of struggle. Therefore, this makes way for a solution.

Do institutions that support democracy and non-violence have a role in spreading awareness?

In my opinion the best method is to focus on schools. There is also a need for it to be extended to universities.

How has nonviolence applied to your life and how has it affected your personality?

Yes I've definitely been able to apply it to my life, and I hope that everyone can have this way of life. I have certainly felt the change after my enrollment in these courses. They have had an impact on my dealings with others, as well as my personality, in respect of both action response and problem solving. Finally, we say at MEND that we are fighting a campaign against violence. We have limited potential yet legitimate aspirations.



Photos from the 2008 Summer Camp, from L-R: 1 & 2 at the 'Freedom for Nablus' camp in the north; 3 & 4 at the Hebron camp in the south. The latter photos were taken by MEND volunteer Katie Roberts.

Roaming Reporter – Summer Camp Special!

Mustafa Jamal- Al Sharif (20) and Mohammed Al-Sharif (19) interviewed Esam al-Zughayyer (20) and Daa Hadad (19), who helped organise the Summer Camp in the South. They explained how they felt about the camp. All are youth members of the Active Nonviolence Network in Hebron.

Article by Taka Nakahara, MEND Resource Development Officer.

Did you enjoy the Summer Camp?

Daa: Yes, I liked it, because in the camp we build friendships with other participants. I also liked it because we played lots of different sports and games and participated in different kinds of workshops.

Esam: I liked it so much and I hope to come to another Summer Camp next year with new participants. I liked it because we were a team, and also because I like the activities. They were all about nonviolent culture.

Which activity did you like the best?

Daa: Dancing, and also writing 'MEND' on glass paper and painting it in nice shapes.

What would you improve for next year's Summer Camp?

Esam: The first thing is to make the camp longer than it was. The camp site should also be based outdoors where there are trees and to have more opportunity to talk about other cultures would be great.