

Resource Guide: Palestinian Nonviolent Resistance

5 BROKEN CAMERAS



PALESTINIAN NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE TO INJUSTICE AND THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

5 Broken Cameras tells the story of Bil'in and the development of a nonviolent movement to resist the building of the wall and settlements on village land. Many viewers of the film may find that the story it tells challenges their preconceived notions about the conflict and that it presents a picture of Palestinian civil disobedience and resistance not often publicized in the US. It is therefore important to place the protests in Bil'in within a context of historic Palestinian nonviolent resistance to injustice and occupation.

Palestinian nonviolent resistance dates back to the Ottoman and British Mandate periods. While the story of armed Palestinian resistance is known, the equally important history of nonviolent resistance is largely untold. Nonviolent resistance has taken many forms. At times it conforms to a traditional American view of what nonviolent protest looks like—protest marches, hunger strikes, work stoppages, tax revolts, protest villages, economic activism, etc. At other times this resistance is more subtle and perhaps harder for an American audience to understand. This is the

daily resistance of laborers who circumvent checkpoints to find work, of families who build homes without permits knowing that they risk demolition, of villagers who remain on their land despite being denied access to water, electricity, health and education services, and other basic needs. This is the resistance of average people who refuse to accept and cooperate with discriminatory policies and laws.

While media presentations of the conflict highlight acts of violence, the truth is that Palestinian resistance to occupation and injustice is overwhelmingly nonviolent. Not only has Palestinian nonviolence been ignored, but since the British mandate nonviolent protests have been brutally suppressed and leaders have been imprisoned, exiled, and killed. Nevertheless, nonviolent resistance continues. When one generation sees its attempts to establish new forms of resistance violently suppressed, the next generation begins again and they invent new strategies of resistance.

For more information on Palestinian and Israeli nonviolent resistance to occupation and injustice see: <https://afsc.org/resource/faces-hope-learn-about-palestinian-israeli-conflict>



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Below are examples of just a few of the types of nonviolent actions that Palestinians have engaged in on a nearly daily basis.

- March 30, 1976: Thousands of Palestinian citizens of Israel take part in strikes and nonviolent demonstrations in response to the Israeli government's plan to expropriate 60,000 dunams of Palestinian-owned land in the Galilee. Israeli military and police forces shoot dead six unarmed protesters and injure another 96. To commemorate this incident, Palestinians observe Land Day every year as a day for action and protest.
- 1987–1993: Palestinians participate in the first intifada (Arabic for “shaking off”), protesting Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Protests against Israeli military rule and oppression took many forms including a refusal to pay taxes, economic boycotts, organizing community schools when the military ordered all schools closed, hunger strikes, and labor strikes. Israeli forces attempted to repress this resistance by jailing and exiling Palestinian political leaders. In the absence of leadership, Palestinian grassroots organizations filled the void and established popular committees to fulfill the duties of official institutions. Women’s committees, trade unions, youth movements, and prisoner organizations provided education, healthcare, and other basic services to Palestinians living under occupation. These committees allowed Palestinians to continue resisting through protest and non-cooperation and to continue to function as a cooperative society despite military crackdowns.
- 1989: Beit Sahour, a village in the West Bank, initiates a total tax revolt, refusing to pay taxes to the Israeli civil administration stating that the taxes were used for the maintenance of their occupation. Israeli authorities placed the village under siege for six months, until the strikers’ steadfastness and international outcry forced an end to the renewal of administrative detention orders.
- 2002–Present: Israel begins construction of the wall within the West Bank, confiscating huge amounts of Palestinian land. Palestinian villages in the path of the wall launch regular nonviolent demonstrations. Several villages have succeeded in rerouting or delaying construction of the wall, including Bil’in. Today, popular committees continue to resist acquisition of land from the wall and settlements through weekly demonstrations in villages across the West Bank.
- 2005: Over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations join together and issue a call for the use of boycott, divestment, and sanctions tactics to bring freedom, equality, and justice to Palestine and Israel, sparking a global BDS movement. Since the call’s inception, targeted campaigns around the world have challenged corporations and cultural and academic institutions that reinforce Israel’s occupation and the denial of Palestinian rights.
- 2012: Thousands of Palestinian detainees participate in hunger strikes to protest the Israeli use of administrative detentions, which can be applied without charge or trial and renewed indefinitely. Individual strikers are released from detention over the course of the year. In May 2012, Israel agrees to several terms of the strike, including an end to renewal of administrative detention. However, to date Israel continues to hold prisoners in administrative detention without charge or trial.
- January 2013: Palestinian activists erect Bab al-Shams, a protest village in an area slated for settlement development. The protest site draws international attention to the confiscation of Palestinian land through settlement construction. Israeli authorities remove the village after two days, but this action inspires the establishment of other protest villages in the West Bank as part of an effort to call attention to land confiscation, settlement building, and settler violence.