

## Palestinians Strongly Resist Home Demolitions

*9 November, 2012*

As a run-up to the Israeli elections in January, the Israeli Prime Minister, Nathan the Yahoo, has unleashed a wave of home demolitions across the occupied West Bank.

I was present on Wednesday 7 November at the demolition of 2 homes in the village of Hares, in the Salfet area near the huge settler colony of Ariel. I am with the International Women's Peace Service, one of many international groups now working in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. We received a call at 9.45am that there were bulldozers and soldiers in Hares. By 10am we were headed there in a taxi. Our passage to the house threatened with demolition was blocked by 2 jeeps and 4 soldiers. Palestinian villagers were coming from everywhere, summoned by the efficient loudspeakers of the mosque. Other soldiers were chasing the young Palestinian men, the *shabab*. Palestinians were trying to get to their homes, but were blocked by the soldiers.

We made our way to the first of the threatened houses. There were 2 huge bulldozers in front, a Caterpillar and a Hyundai. At first things were relatively calm. After half an hour of having their way blocked, the shabab started throwing a few stones. There were the odd shots of tear gas. There was a general stand-off with the army. A PLO official there told us that a fax had been received apparently giving the court's leave to the home owners to appeal.

A couple of us from IWPS went into the house, still half-built, and went to the top floor to get an overall view. We weren't expecting anything untoward. Despite the fax and after much heated discussion, the IOF Commander decided to go ahead. Suddenly, there was a huge barrage of teargas aimed at the house. Feeling nauseous, we got out of there fast. By now there were people overcome with the tear gas being treated by the Palestinian health workers.

During the stand-off with the army, a Palestinian woman was lying on a mattress in front of the house in a distressed state with physical effects from tear gas. The medics had called an ambulance but the blockade of army jeeps prevented it reaching her. The army was there from 9.00am till 3pm and during that time approximately 100 soldiers and nine army vehicles were present. The village has 35 houses that are under the threat of a demolition order and these are at different stages in the litigation process. The three houses in question are needed for growing, extended families and are all on their privately owned land. The demolition orders were issued 3 years previously.

It was terrible to see the people so defenseless, so powerless, with this huge ugly military machine telling them they could not go on their own land. We have picked olives with them, been invited into their homes, they have prepared us delicious food and mint tea in the fields, we have laughed with them, played with their children. To see them treated like this is heart-breaking. What possible threat are their homes to the State of Israel? It's not about security, it's theft and dispossession and ethnic cleansing, because the ultimate goal is to have the land without the people.