



DELEGATION TO PALESTINE

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CANADIANS FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE
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Summary

From October 28 to November 11, 2022, Michael Bueckert, Vice President of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), participated in a two-week delegation to the occupied Palestinian territories and Palestinian communities within Israel (often referred to as '48 Palestine). The trip was organized in conjunction with Peter Larson of the Ottawa Forum on Israel/Palestine (OFIP), and Philip Sherwood, a member of the national coordinating team of the United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel (UNJPPI) was the third member of the delegation. The trip provided CJPME's Bueckert with the opportunity to connect directly with many organizations and individuals who are working to protect human rights and fight for a just future in Palestine-Israel.



CJPME's Michael Bueckert at the Dome of the Rock, Al-Aqsa compound, occupied East Jerusalem

Highlights of the trip included meetings with the leadership of Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP) and Addameer – two Palestinian human rights organizations which have been criminalized by Israel, and whose offices were raided two-and-a-half months earlier. The delegation also met with former Palestinian members of the Israeli Knesset from two political parties; the BDS National Committee; the co-founders of the One Democratic State Campaign; community organizations; Palestinian business owners; academics; and youth activists. The delegation also visited current hotspots including Sheikh Jarrah, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and Jenin, as well as unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Naqab (Negev) – including Al-Araqib, which has been demolished by Israel over 200 times.

The delegation also met with the head of the Canadian mission in Ramallah, the top Canadian diplomat to the Palestinian Authority. Delegation members had frank and useful discussions as they challenged Canada's representative on the need to publicly denounce Israel's attacks against Palestinian human rights defenders.

One emphasis of the trip was to learn more about the experiences of Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the delegation spent significant time in Umm al-Fahm (in the "Triangle"), Nazareth, Haifa, and Jaffa. We were interested in hearing not just about past and present issues, but about the future – hopes, strategies, and their thoughts on a political solution.

CJPME expresses its deepest appreciation to Peter Larson of OFIP for his work in helping to organize the itinerary and meetings. Michael and CJPME are also indebted to the many Palestinian and Israeli individuals and organizations who met with the delegation, shared their perspectives, and offered incredible Palestinian hospitality.

Themes and Takeaways

Fragmentation and Unity of the Palestinian People

For CJPME's Michael Bueckert, the trip to Palestine clarified the problem of the fragmentation of the Palestinian people, as Israel has divided Palestinians into different domains of control. This is something that Amnesty International identifies as a pillar of Israel's system of apartheid. Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship possess different identification papers, different voting rights, and different rights of movement, as compared to Palestinians in East Jerusalem, who nonetheless have more rights than those in the West Bank or Gaza. This difference in status has dramatic implications.

To describe one clarifying experience: one day the delegation travelled the short distance from Umm al-Fahm to Burqin – two Palestinian towns which sit on opposing sides of the Green Line, virtually lying on the opposite side of the hill. In Umm al-Fahm, Palestinians have a right to vote in Israeli elections but live as second-class citizens. In Burqin (near Jenin), Palestinians live stateless under a brutal military occupation. This same day, the team was accompanied by a young Palestinian woman from Umm al-Fahm to meet with a girl's soccer team in Jenin. While she was able to travel across the checkpoints, her peers on the soccer team are denied that same right, and they expressed their desire to travel to all parts of '48 Palestine. Some may never be given a permit that would allow them to travel the mere twenty kilometres to Umm al-Fahm. Despite being virtual neighbours, Israel has imposed on them deep and arbitrary divisions.



View from the bus to Ramallah near Qalandiya checkpoint

Despite the reality of fragmentation, the delegation heard from Palestinian citizens of Israel that they identify as part of the Palestinian people and that they are frustrated with being overlooked or treated as a separate population. One young woman in Nazareth said that she would “never identify as Israeli.” Politicians, youth activists, and community groups across historic Palestine are actively engaged in a variety of efforts to build a sense of Palestinian identity, and to challenge the same racist political structure that oppresses Palestinians in the occupied territories. This is an uphill battle, as we heard how dominant Israeli narratives and

school curricula seek to deny them their Palestinian identity and replace it with the depoliticized concept of “Israeli Arabs.” This is an intentional form of divide and control against the indigenous population.

Apartheid and Settler-Colonialism

In recent years, human rights groups including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and B’Tselem have issued reports concluding that Israel is practicing apartheid against Palestinians. This is not a controversial topic among Palestinians, regardless of whether they live in the West Bank or in ’48 Palestine, as Palestinians have long recognized the apartheid character of Israel. Even for Palestinian politicians who have served as members of the Israeli Knesset, exercising political rights not afforded to Palestinians elsewhere, it is a matter of fact that Israel is an apartheid state, or worse. There is a sense that Palestinians need to take advantage of the new vocabulary of apartheid to advocate for equality. Many others also spoke of the need to bring in the concept of settler-colonialism, as an end to apartheid (the providing of equal rights) would not itself result in a process of decolonization.



Beduin women crossing the highway between unrecognized villages in the Naqab

Israeli elections – Reactions to the new far-right government

The trip coincided early on with the Israeli general elections, and this provided an opportunity to hear from Palestinians about their impressions of the new government. Netanyahu won the election with the support of a far-right political party which will be the third-largest party in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament), while left-leaning Zionist party Meretz and the Palestinian party Balad failed to meet the electoral threshold and will have no representation in the Knesset.

Overwhelmingly, the response that the delegation heard from Palestinians regarding the rise of the new far-right government was not of alarm, but disinterest. While many were concerned that this government would be immediately dangerous for Palestinians, it was thought to be “no less dangerous than the last government.” In fact, many Palestinians said that this was a

positive development, as it will be easier to campaign against an openly racist government which exemplifies what they refer to as the “real” face of Israel.



Election advertisements

Israeli elections – Should Palestinians participate?

We heard mixed perspectives on whether Palestinian citizens of Israel should participate in the Israeli legislative elections. Many Palestinian citizens of Israel told the delegation that they choose to boycott Israeli elections, as they do not see the Knesset as a legitimate institution or a place for real change. Many Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) expressed this same viewpoint. They do not believe that electing Palestinian members to the Knesset has improved daily life or brought meaningful change; on the contrary, they see that participation in the Knesset has forced unacceptable compromises and that it grants undue legitimacy to a racist institution.

Even among those who support, campaign, or run for Palestinian (or “Arab”) political parties, many expressed that they do not see the Knesset as a primary site for change, but rather see elections as a strategic tool which they can use as a platform to talk about discrimination and equality.

The May 2021 Uprising

The events of May 2021 are sometimes referred to as the “May 2021 Uprising” or the “Unity Intifada.” In response to Israel’s attacks on Al-Aqsa, expulsion threats in Sheikh Jarrah, and the bombing of Gaza, Palestinian citizens of Israel took part in unprecedented demonstrations of solidarity. Across ’48 Palestine, young Palestinians took to the streets and confronted police, and were often met with the same forms of police violence faced by protestors in the OPT, as well as mob violence from Israelis. We heard that these protests were partly motivated by Israel’s attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque (which has become a unifying symbol), but were also related to frustrations over racism, crime, and other local issues.

Palestinians everywhere speak about the May 2021 Uprising as a “key moment” and a “turning point.” The delegation heard that the May 2021 Uprising:

- Created a stronger and unprecedented sense of shared struggle and unity among the Palestinian people, including those in '48 Palestine;
- Politicized the younger generation, which has largely abandoned organized politics in favour of spontaneous action;
- Resulted in shared feelings of hope, power, and victory. As one person said, “We saw how powerful we can be in the street.” Another person said that May 2021 provided “a sense that we are powerful and can change things if we mobilize. This feeling is what we remember from May.”
- At the same time, we heard from many people that May 2021 marked a turning point for the worse, in that it emboldened Israeli racism against Palestinian citizens of Israel. One woman from Haifa said that there’s no “co-existence” in her city, and that since 2021 there has only been “open racism” against Palestinians. This is not just a problem of racist sentiments, but also of an escalation of violent racist attacks on Palestinian youth.



The barrier enclosing the Gaza Strip, as seen from Sderot

Support for a One-State Solution

With very few exceptions, the delegation did not find support for a two-state solution among Palestinians. Most Palestinians met by the delegation described the two-state solution as unfair and based on racial separation. Palestinian citizens of Israel say that the two-state solution excludes them from the definition of the Palestinian people (for example, they have been completely left out of the Oslo process). Others worry that it would designate those who remain outside a future Palestinian state as “Israeli-only.”

Instead, when we asked Palestinians (and Jewish Israeli activists) about their preferred political future, most people talked about a single democratic state which is shared between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. Young people agreed that they would be able to live in peace and unity with Jewish Israelis in a single state, as long as Jewish Israelis abandon their expectation of dominance, and stop restricting Palestinians to a second-class position.

However, regardless of personal convictions, there is a sense that necessary political strategy is still lacking, and there is a long way before a one-state solution will be realized. Until there is a Palestinian movement with recognized authority which can take up this demand and campaign for it, it is unclear what others can do. Activists close to Balad hope that it can start to play this role, but this would require a change in political strategy. Many practical questions also remain about the nature of a future state, and what decolonization looks like. How, for example, would a new equitable society address the economic disparities caused by decades of apartheid.

Armed struggle

The delegation's trip came amid an escalation of violence in the West Bank. For months there had been an increase in attacks on Israelis by Palestinian armed groups, and near daily violent raids by Israeli forces. More than 120 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank this year, and at least 15 Israelis have been killed by Palestinians. While the delegation was in Palestine there was particular attention on an armed group from Nablus called the Lion's Den, which had been organizing attacks on Israeli soldiers and military checkpoints. Israel responded with violent raids and imposed a siege on the city (a clear form of collective punishment), with all entrances to the city restricted for weeks.

CJPME's Bueckert perceived a sense of general sympathy towards the Lion's Den among Palestinians, and a popular belief in the legitimacy of armed resistance. The delegation heard armed struggle described as self-defence, and there was a sense that violence was a method of last resort in a context of crushing oppression. Many of the young militants, after all, are only as old as the Second Intifada, and have lived their entire lives under military occupation without any political hope or horizon. Others said that violence reminds Israelis that there is a problem that must be resolved. Israel may be trying to suppress armed resistance through greater use of force, but it only appears to be creating greater sympathy towards those who participate in it.



Palestine Sunbird in Umm al-Fahm

Trip Highlights

Visits with Palestinian civil society organizations criminalized by Israel

In October 2021, the Israeli government designated 6 leading Palestinian civil society organizations as “terrorist” organizations, in an apparent attempt to shut down their human rights work. To date, no other country has found Israel’s evidence against the organizations to be credible. In August 2022, the Ramallah offices of these organizations were raided by Israeli forces, which confiscated files and property and welded the organizations’ doors shut.

Many European countries have criticized Israel’s actions against these Palestinian organizations and have committed to continue working with them. Canada, however, has not taken a clear public position.



(L) Delegation meeting with Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCIP); (R) CJPME's Bueckert at the entrance to DCIP's previous office which was raided by Israeli forces in August 2022. The door still shows signs of extensive damage.

To better understand the situation, the delegation was able to meet with two of the affected organizations, namely Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCIP) and Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association. The delegation met the organizations at their offices, which were located above or next to the offices which had been raided two months earlier, and which still showed clear evidence of extensive damage. Both organizations described a state of severe uncertainty and insecurity, as staff continue to work in fear of being arrested and prosecuted at any time.

At the DCIP office, the delegation met with Khaled Quzmar, DCIP general director, and Ayed Abu Aqtaish, Accountability Program Director. DCIP was founded in 1991 and it advocates for the rights of Palestinian children under occupation. Its work includes monitoring the killings and injuries of children by Israeli forces and providing assistance to children in Israel’s military court system. The delegation heard that Israel’s terrorism designation was intended to disconnect the organizations from international support and solidarity. The delegation heard that because the designation is based on secret information, the organizations have no legal avenue to challenge it; similarly, they no longer have any legal means to reclaim equipment and files confiscated by

the Israeli military. Finally, the delegation heard that while many countries visited DCIP to show their support, Canada and the US were not among them.

At the Addameer office, the delegation met with Sahar Francis, the organization's general director, and Milena Ansari, the organization's International Advocacy Officer. Addameer provides legal support to Palestinian political prisoners and documents abuses within the prison system, including torture and the lack of fair trials. The delegation was told that, as a result of the terrorism designation, lawyers affiliated with Addameer face threats and have to resort to working without identifying themselves out of fear of being prosecuted. Addameer confirmed that Canada has not reached out to them, had not attended briefings despite being invited, and had not provided any other statements of support at any level. They felt strongly that Canada needs to call on Israel to revoke the designation. If countries simply decide to act as if Israel's designations did not exist, the threat will remain. This sets a dangerous precedent that Israel could extend to other organizations.



CJPME's Bueckert meeting with Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association

When attempting to leave the country through Ben-Gurion airport at the end of his trip, the passport of CJPME's Michael Bueckert was flagged by passport control, and he was questioned and falsely accused by a security agent of meeting with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). He was given a warning that doing so could affect his re-entry to Israel. He interpreted this as retaliation for his meetings with DCIP and Addameer, which Israel falsely claims to be front groups for the PFLP. Michael believes this "warning" to be a threat against meeting with human rights defenders, intended to discourage people like himself from visiting them. Michael has been in touch with Canadian officials about the incident.

Visit with Canadian officials

Immediately following their meetings with DCIP and Addameer, the delegation visited the Canadian mission in Ramallah to meet with David Da Silva, who had recently taken over the role of Canada's Representative to the Palestinian Authority. Also in attendance were the head of the office's political team and the staff in charge of international assistance. It was a useful but frank meeting, as delegation members challenged the government on several important issues.

The delegation's top priority was to draw attention to Israel's violent repression of Palestinian human rights organizations, including the six which had been criminalized and raided. Delegation members relayed to the Canadian officials the concerns they had heard from DCIP and Addameer, and urged Canada to publicly denounce Israel's fraudulent terrorism designations against them. As of that meeting, Canada had still not expressed a clear opinion on the matter, neither on the legitimacy of Israel's actions nor in support of the 6 organizations.

Da Silva was not able to offer any information on where Canada officially stands on the 6 organizations, but pointed out that Canada has not followed Israel in classifying them as terrorist organizations. CJPME's Michael Bueckert also believes that Da Silva wanted the delegation to come away with the impression that Canada had been critical of Israel's actions behind the scenes, even if he would not confirm this outright. Da Silva explained that instead of being vocal on various issues, Canada believes it is better able to leverage its friendship with Israel behind the scenes. Bueckert pointed out that this means that Canada never actually takes a public position on such issues, and expressed CJPME's strong dissatisfaction with this approach.



Delegation meeting with David Da Silva, Canada's Representative to the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah

The delegation communicated DCIP's and Addameer's criticism of Canada's failure to get involved in defence of the organizations, but the representatives of the mission asserted that they had, in fact, been in contact with some of the organizations and that they had attended at least one briefing. The delegation strongly encouraged them to reach out to DCIP and Addameer to offer support, and was later able to help arrange a meeting between Da Silva and DCIP.

The delegation also mentioned the growing consensus within the human rights sector that Israel is practicing apartheid against the Palestinians, as per reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UN experts, and Israel's largest human rights group B'Tselem. Canada has rejected such reports out of hand without offering any justification. When the delegation pressed Canada's mission representatives to explain Canada's position, they were unable to provide a reason for rejecting the apartheid analysis. CJPME's Bueckert emphasized that the government will have to engage with the reality of apartheid eventually.

Since this meeting, CJPME's Bueckert has been in touch with Da Silva on several follow-up items, and looks forward to further engagement.

Trip to Jenin

The delegation spent a day in Jenin and the neighbouring town of Burqin in the West Bank, which has been subject to significant Israeli violence in recent months, with almost daily violent raids against members of Palestinian armed groups. The day after the delegation's visit, two Palestinians – including a 14-year-old child from Burqin – were killed by Israeli forces during a raid in the Jenin refugee camp.

The delegation visited the Jenin Creative Cultural Centre and met with director Yousef Awad, along with a young woman who is active at the centre. The cultural centre was launched during the second intifada and provides a variety of programming for youth.

In addition to providing a tour of Burqin and the Old City of Jenin, the centre arranged for the delegation to meet with a young women's soccer team, some of whom are from the Jenin Refugee Camp. Many of the young women on the soccer team talked about Israeli violence, as many had lost members of their families, as well as the overall sense of a lack of any security: even in their own homes. As one woman explained it: "Daily they [Israelis] come to attack us at school time or when sleeping so it is our right to defend ourselves. There's no safety or security for anyone at all." The other major theme which emerged was the lack of freedom of movement due to Israeli checkpoints and travel restrictions which prevent them from leaving the West Bank. As one woman said, "Do you think that we will accept to continue this kind of life?"



Delegation with the Jenin Creative Cultural Centre and a young women's soccer team in Jenin.

Visit to Memorials for Shireen Abu Akleh

Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-American journalist with Al Jazeera, was killed while covering an Israeli raid of the Jenin refugee camp in May earlier this year. Since then, multiple investigations by journalists and NGOs have determined that she was deliberately targeted by Israeli forces.



(L) The location where Shireen Abu Akleh was killed in Jenin; (M) Mural in Nazareth; (R) Mural in Bethlehem

In Jenin the delegation visited the memorial at the site where Abu Akleh was killed. As she was a well-known and respected journalist, the delegation saw murals commemorating her life from Bethlehem to Nazareth.

Trip to the Naqab

With the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (Dukium), the delegation visited unrecognized Bedouin communities in the Naqab (Negev desert) in southern Israel near Beersheba. Delegation members learned about how Israel has been putting pressure on these communities for decades to try to force them to leave, and how Israel has refused to provide most of them with water, electricity, or education. Israel's frequent demolitions of Bedouin homes and structures is cruel and inhumane, and is similar to Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes in the OPT.



Unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Naqab

One village that the delegation visited was Al-Araqib, which has been demolished and rebuilt over 200 times. Israel is trying to push this tiny community off its land to make way for a Jewish National Fund forest. Those who remain have been reduced to living in a cemetery with only a single permanent structure. The delegation met with Sheikh Sayiah al-Turi, who was recently arrested and is banned from entering the cemetery, and was invited into the home of his family. The Israelis had been to the village only a few days earlier, and were threatening further demolitions.

Only a few kilometres nearby, the Sodastream factory sits in an industry zone on the outskirts of Rahat, which was built as a township to relocate Bedouin and is now a city of 70,000 people.



(L) Delegation meeting with Bedouin family in the unrecognized village of Al-Araqib in the Naqab; (R) Sheikh Sayiah al-Turi, the head of Al-Araqib

Trip to Sheikh Jarrah and East Jerusalem

In Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, the delegation joined the weekly demonstration held by Free Jerusalem, an activist group which includes Jewish Israelis, in support of the 175 Palestinian families who are facing threats of expulsion from their homes. The delegation was later given a tour of the area, and shown the homes which have been taken over by settlers.

The delegation was also given a tour of the Old City of Jerusalem, and learned about how the threat of dispossession looms over the entire population. The delegation saw homes, community centres, and theatres which had been either shut down or taken over by settlers. The delegation also learned about the psychological impact of Israel's threats to take away the homes or residency status of Palestinians in East Jerusalem. This is such a strong fear that many people avoid updating their legal documents in case they might be arbitrarily targeted and lose their residency. Finally, the delegation heard of a new case of collective punishment in which Israel is attempting to revoke the residency statuses of distant relatives of a man accused of a crime – if this is successful, it could be applied to thousands of people to deny them rights.



(L) Weekly Sheikh Jarrah protest in East Jerusalem; (M) Palestinian home targeted by settlers in Sheikh Jarrah; (R) Heavy police presence in the Old City of Jerusalem

Visit to Jaffa (Yaffa)

In Jaffa (often also known as Yaffa), the delegation had dinner with members of the League for the Jaffa Arabs, which was formed in 1976 to defend the rights of Palestinians in the city. The delegation was invited into an old Arab house which had not been destroyed by the Israelis, and were shown around the neighbourhood of Ajami. While much of Jaffa was destroyed in 1948, Ajami was initially fenced in as a ghetto to separate its inhabitants from the Jewish population. The delegation learned about how gentrification of the neighbourhood is being used to pursue a political agenda and remove Palestinians from the neighbourhood – 500 families currently face eviction notices.

Visit to Kafr Qasm

The delegation visited Kafr Qasim, a Palestinian town within Israel near the boundaries of the occupied West Bank. In 1956, Israeli border police shot and killed 49 men, women and children as they were returning home from their fields, during a curfew which had been imposed during their absence (of which they were unaware). Every year on October 29 the town holds a demonstration to commemorate the massacre, and the delegation was present to participate in the event.



Annual commemoration of the 1956 massacre in Kafr Qasim

Uncovering the Nakba

In Jaffa the delegation met with Zochrot, an organization that teaches Israelis about the Nakba and advocates for the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. In the course of its trip the delegation also visited the sites of several villages which had been depopulated in 1948 or 1967.



Depopulated villages: (L) CJPME's Bueckert at Canada Park; (M) Ruins at Al-Lajun; (R) Beach at the former site of Tantura

- Canada Park – Funded by Canadian donors, this recreational park run by the Jewish National Fund is located on occupied Palestinian land, sitting on top of the ruins of the depopulated Palestinian villages of Yalu, Imwas and Beit Nuba: expelled and destroyed in 1967.
- Al-Lajun – In the middle of the Triangle, this village was depopulated in 1948. The land title remains with the original owners, but it was closed by a military order and forested by the Jewish National Fund, while its surrounding fields were confiscated.
- Ein Hod / Ayn Hawd – This is one of a few Palestinian villages where the original buildings were not destroyed but remain intact. It is now a trendy artists' colony. After being expelled, the original residents took refuge in the nearby woods, eventually building a new town which was only recognized in 1994.

- **Tantura** – Depopulated in 1948, this former Palestinian town near Haifa is now a popular beach. In 1948 Israeli forces committed a massacre against the Palestinian residents, and a mass grave is believed to be located under the parking lot.

Palestinian activists reaching an international audience

The delegation spoke to several Palestinian organizations and individuals who have initiatives to engage with and mobilize an international audience. In Ramallah, delegation members met with Mahmoud of the BDS National Committee (BNC) and Nada of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). During the meeting, everyone emphasized the need to continue working together, and to build stronger connections between the BNC and Canadian activists. Also in Ramallah, CJPME's Bueckert met with Ines Abdel Razack of Rābet, a project of the Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy (PIPD), about its work to raise the profile of Palestinian perspectives and to advocate for the digital rights of Palestinians. Bueckert also met with Fathi and Rawan of "Decolonize Palestine," a website which is an amazing resource for teaching about Palestine and debunking Israeli myths, aimed at an international audience.



CJPME's Bueckert with Mahmoud of the BNC and Nada of PACBI

The One-State Campaign

In West Jerusalem the delegation had dinner with Jeff Halper, Jewish Israeli activist and co-founder of the Campaign for a One Democratic State. During the dinner, everyone agreed on the necessity of decolonization, and considered different approaches. Halper made a strategic case for the need to build a common vision among Palestinians and Jewish Israelis for a shared future, as a way of relieving Israeli fears about giving up control (even recognizing that most Israelis still won't support this without international pressure). He also expressed his personal view that a single democratic state must be championed by a movement with significant Palestinian leadership.

In Kawkawb, in the Galilee north of Nazareth, the delegation met with Awad Abdelfattah. Abdelfattah co-founded the Balad political party, served as its Secretary-General for 16 years, but never ran for the Knesset. He is also the co-founder of the Campaign for a One Democratic State with Jeff Halper, which he described as "not yet a movement" and separate from Balad. Most of our conversation focused on Balad, whose pillars call for 1) Israel as a state for all its citizens; 2) the right of return; 3) Israeli withdrawal from occupied Palestinian land. He spoke about how prior to Oslo he had boycotted Israeli elections, but Balad was formed in 1995 to use citizenship to seek a democratic state and end colonial control of the OPT. From the beginning, participation in elections was a "strategy for opposing the racist structure of Israel."

Palestinian Politicians in Israel

In the week following Israel's general election, the delegation met with Palestinian citizens of Israel from the political parties Hadash and Balad, who had been previously elected to the Israeli Knesset. In this election, the former Joint List (a coalition which had combined the Palestinian political parties from 2015-2022) had broken apart, with Balad excluded from the list and running on its own. Hadash won 5 seats in the new Knesset, while Balad received a significant increase in votes but narrowly missed the electoral threshold.



(L) Delegation with Yousef Jabareen (Hadash); (M) Delegation with Sami Abu Shehadeh (Balad); (R) CJPME's Bueckert with Haneen Zoabi (Balad)

In Umm al-Fahm the delegation met Yousef Jabareen, former Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, 2015-2021 (Hadash). Jabareen talked about the challenges of Palestinian unity, as any expression of solidarity “with our people” is being perceived as supporting terrorism or being a security threat. While Hadash supports a two-state solution, Jabareen gave the impression that this is more to do with political constraints than with beliefs, as the two-state framework allows the party to cooperate in the Knesset (as Israeli law would disqualify any party that calls for a single democratic state). Regarding the issue of apartheid, Jabareen said what Palestinians face is “worse than apartheid,” i.e. apartheid plus the added brutality of Israel's military occupation.

In Jaffa the delegation met Sami Abu Shehadeh, current leader of Balad and former Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, 2019-2022 (Balad). Despite Balad's failure to reach the threshold and the loss of Balad MKs in the Knesset, Abu Shehadeh was optimistic about the future, seeing Balad's vote increase as an opportunity to rebuild the party with regained confidence. Abu Shehadeh explained how the “whole state is planned on racial separation,” and spoke about the need to confront the deep problems of racism in Israeli society. Regarding the one-state solution, Abu Shehadeh said he considers that Israel is already one apartheid state in practice – but that there are many practical questions about what an eventual one-state solution would look like. He also reflected on how most of the world doesn't see Palestinians in Israel, in part because they don't do international work.

In Nazareth the delegation had dinner with Haneen Zoabi, former Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, 2009-2019 (Balad). Despite the election loss for Balad, Zoabi was surprisingly optimistic. Both she and Abdelfatteh (see above) had given up on the party in recent years,

unsatisfied with how being part of the Joint List had subsumed and suppressed the specific political advocacy of Balad. Both Zoabi and Abdelfatteh hope that Balad will now be able to rebuild and refocus its efforts – which both say should be in support of a single democratic state which unites Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line.

Palestinian Youth in Israel

The delegation met with youth activists in Nazareth, including Ibrahim from Mossawa Center (Advocacy Center for Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel) and Mina with the Community Party youth, which is associated with Hadash. They told us about the discrimination facing Palestinians in Israel, and how despite being citizens, Palestinians in Israel live as if under occupation. The delegation heard about the leadership of youth in the uprising of May 2021, when youth clashed with police in the streets every night, facing arrests and rubber bullets. They said that this was a turning point, not just in terms of changing the perspectives of Palestinians (who feel more united), but also in making Israelis more open about their racism against Palestinians.

In Haifa, the delegation met with Nidaa Nasser of Baladna (Arab Youth Association), whose goal is to foster Palestinian identity among youth in Israel, by politicizing youth and providing them a space for activism based on democratic Palestinian values. Their projects include evaluating Israeli curricula, the production of board games, political hiking tours, and spaces for youth to meet and discuss with Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.



Delegation with Nidaa Nasser of Baladna (Arab Youth Association)

Palestinian business owners in OPT and Israel

The delegation also met Palestinian business owners who face significant challenges, both in the OPT and within Israel. In East Jerusalem, the delegation met with a Palestinian businessman from Beit Sahour in the West Bank who had been granted a very exclusive “Businessman’s Card” which allows him to travel between the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Nevertheless, even with this rare privilege, he is not allowed to drive through the checkpoints, and effectively requires a foreign driver to chauffeur him between cities. For eight years, he was refused a travel permit with no explanation.

In Nazareth, the delegation met a young Palestinian café owner who started her business in the Old City, even though it is not as profitable, in order to maintain the Palestinian character of the city. She spoke of attempts by the municipality to force the ‘Israelisation’ of the city through tourism projects.



Silwan, East Jerusalem

List of Notable Locations Visited:

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories:

- East Jerusalem (including Sheikh Jarrah, Al Aqsa, Old City)
- Ramallah
- Jenin
- Burqin
- Bethlehem
- Canada Park

Israel / '48 Palestine:

- Jaffa and Tel Aviv
- Haifa (including Atlit, Ein Hod, Tantura, Isfiya)
- Nazareth and Galilee (including Kawkawb)
- Triangle (Umm al-Fahm, Kafr Qasm, Al-Lajun)
- Negev (Beersheva, Bedouin villages, Al-Araqib, Rahat)
- Gaza barrier (Sderot and Eretz Crossing)

List of Notable Meetings:

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories:

- Representative Office of Canada to the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah
- Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCIP)

- Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
- BDS National Committee (BNC) and the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)
- Jenin Creative Cultural Centre
- Young women's soccer team in Jenin
- Palestinian business owners in E. Jerusalem
- Academics at Al-Quds University: Munir Neseibah and Osama Zishek
- Decolonize Palestine (Young Palestinian website creators)
- Playground Builders
- Rābet, a project of the Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy (PIPD)

Israel / '48 Palestine:

- Zochrot
- Mossawa Center (Advocacy Center for Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel)
- Baladna (Arab Youth Association)
- Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (Dukium)
- The League for the Jaffa Arabs
- Jeff Halper, Jewish Israeli activist and co-founder of the Campaign for a One Democratic State
- Awad Abdelfattah, Palestinian co-founder of Balad and the One Democratic State campaign
- Yousef Jabareen, former Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, 2015-2021 (Hadash)
- Haneen Zoabi, former Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, 2009-2019 (Balad)
- Sami Abu Shadi, leader of Balad and former Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, 2019-2022 (Balad)
- Bedouin community in Al-Araqib
- Owner of the Amina Café in Nazareth (Palestinian business owner in Israel)
- Additional young Palestinian activists in Umm al-Fahm and Isfiya