

A Letter to the United Church of Canada



2015.06.21 Daily Life in Susiya. South Hebron Hills, Palestine. Lyarkie

SUSIYA STILL STANDING

“Susiya is a Legend of Palestinian Resistance,” declares Nasser Nawaja’a, Susiya’s young spokesperson and rising Palestinian leader. **“As goes Susiya, so goes the rest of the West Bank’s Area C.”**

Today, August 4, 2015, the village of Khirbet Susiya is not only present, without demolitions, but is hosting a mini United Nations. The outcry from the world has been enormous.

The European Union, the US Acting Consul General, members of the Israeli Knesset (government), the Prime Minister of Palestine and many, many national and international organizations have shown support. Israeli groups have taken a leadership role with community members organizing for Susiya’s survival and informing the world of Israeli government policies, where according to Rabbi for Human Rights spokesperson, Rabbi Arik Ascherman, “...the deck is stacked against Palestinians...” by Israeli government policy.

Susiya made it to question period at the US State Department July 17, 2015. [Daily Press Briefing - July 16, 2015.](#) The list of who in the press scene has been to Susiya is unbelievable: when a media team from Kazakhstan arrives in tiny Susiya along with Associated Press, Al Jazeera English, the New York Times, Reuters, Le Monde and even CNN, you know something is happening.

Symbolic Susiya...Why all the fuss over this one small 350 person village somewhere in the middle of nowhere, Palestine?

As goes Susiya, goes Palestine. Particularly Area C, controlled solely by the Israeli army, called the Israeli Defense Forces. Area C consists mostly of shepherds and farmers, on their land, eking out subsistence livings.

The injustices that Palestinians have put up with for years, since 1948, until today have come to a head. I learned this from Rabbis for Human Rights, Breaking the Silence, B'Tselem, Machsom Watch, Tayoush, Villages Group, all Israeli organizations working for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.

The very right wing, unlawful settlers who now patrol the West Bank, armed, in illegal outposts and settlements are part of Israeli society. Israel, is this the society you wanted to build? Is this the dream you had in mind? The horrors of extremist settlers have been shown to the world as well: most recently a child of 18 months burned to death.

Susiya is symbolic.

This is the shepherd versus the military. (Israel is the 7th ranked military might in the world.)

This is the consumer versus the corporation.

This is what is happening and will happen to many villages all over Palestine unless people speak out.

This is the face and fate of the State of Palestine unless Israel changes its policies.

It is more: it is an opportunity for Israel: justice seeking, peace wanting, righteous Israel.

A 21st century, Israel. A global Israel. A mature Israel. No longer a tribal Israel.

Israel, can you be the one to propose an End to Occupation, an end, without the many strings attached that humiliate and demean your neighbour?

Israel, can you be the one to extend the olive branch? Can you become the Israel you have dreamed of being: the honourable Israel.

If Canada is working behind the scenes to promote this message, then Stephen Harper, you have the blessing of Canadians. If you are working for less than this, you are to be pitied for being on the wrong side of history.

This is what Susiya has taught me: there are people whose hopes, dreams and day to day lives are impacted on every level who still work for peace, for justice and for equality: for new beginnings and the end to what is only bringing sorrow to all involved.

This is why Susiya matters: symbolic of Area C of the West Bank, symbolic of thousands of villages facing demolition of homes and structures, symbolic of the Occupation whose time has run out. It is not only saving Susiya or Palestine...it is saving Israel as well.

Apendix:

US State Department July 16, 2015 transcript:

QUESTION: Do you have a reaction to reports that Israel may demolish part of a village called Susiya in the West Bank for expanding settlements?

MR KIRBY: I do. We're closely following developments in the village of **Susiya in the West Bank**, and we strongly urge the Israeli authorities to refrain from carrying out any demolitions in the village. Demolition of this Palestinian village or of parts of it, and evictions of Palestinians from their homes would be harmful and provocative. Such actions have an impact beyond those individuals and families who are evicted. We are concerned that the demolition of this village may worsen the atmosphere for a peaceful resolution and would set a damaging standard for displacement and land confiscation, particularly given settlement-related activity in the area. We urge Israeli authorities to work with the residents of the village to finalize a plan for the village that addresses the residents' humanitarian needs.