

**Cross-border non-violent
advocacy during the second
Palestinian intifada: the case of
the International Solidarity
Movement**

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The purpose of this paper is to analyse the activities of international volunteers working with Palestinians to empower them in their nonviolent struggle against the Israeli occupation. Since the outbreak of the second intifada (September 2000), there have been several inter-governmental attempts to deploy an international force of unarmed observers to interpose themselves between the Israeli army and Palestinian civilians during outbreaks of violence, but they have been relentlessly vetoed at the Security Council by the United States. In the absence of inter-state initiative¹, the “transnational civil society” has filled in the gap by sending delegations of international volunteers to the region.

Among the different organisations which are explicitly committed to nonviolent forms of intervention, this paper places a particular emphasis on the International Solidarity Movement, because it “has emerged as the most visible face of international activism in Palestine”, “sufficiently effective to be the object of stepped up Israeli pressures” (Seitz 2003: 50).

According to its own definition, “the International Solidarity Movement is a Palestinian-led movement of Palestinian and International activists working to raise awareness of the struggle for Palestinian freedom and an end to Israeli occupation. [They] utilize nonviolent, direct-action methods of resistance to confront and challenge illegal Israeli occupation forces and policies”². This description clarifies the links between foreign volunteers and the local population (international advocacy at the service of Palestinian activists), the goal of the movement (raising awareness globally, and ending the occupation locally), and its methods of engagement (nonviolent direct action): these three elements will now be reviewed in the light of my own experience with the ISM in Summer 2003³.

Commitment to nonviolence and its limits

On the ISM website, it reads that “as enshrined in international law and UN resolutions, we recognise the Palestinian right to resist Israeli violence and occupation via legitimate armed struggle. However, we believe that nonviolence can be a powerful weapon in fighting oppression and we are committed to the principles of nonviolent resistance.”⁴ In an interview, two of the co-founders of the movement define nonviolence both in its negative (exclusion of the use of verbal and physical abuse) and positive connotations: it implies respect for everyone, including the opponent (Arraf and Shapiro 2003). Another co-founder, Ghassan Andoni, adds the dimension of “standing up for the powerless but not against the powerful”, and the

¹ There is one exception to this rule of non-intervention by foreign states: since 1994, a “Temporary International Presence” operates in the highly divided city of Hebron in the West Bank. Composed of civil-military delegates from six European countries, this mission is very limited as it only has an observation mandate, reporting back to the delegates’ respective countries and Israel on human rights and security issues (www.tiph.org).

² Retrieved from www.palsolidarity.org/about/aboutISM.htm

³ In July/August 2003, I spent several weeks as a participant observer with ISM, in the context of a PhD research fieldwork, following volunteers in their different areas of operation within the West Bank (Jerusalem, Bethehem, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqilia districts).

⁴ www.palsolidarity.org/about/aboutISM.htm. This statement has originated an intense debate in the US press following the killing of the volunteer Rachel Corrie, and has often been misused or misquoted by hostile journalists trying to depict the ISM as supporting Palestinian armed resistance.

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importance of establishing links with the opponent. He also affirms his “faith in the human inside all of us, which will stop a soldier from shooting an activist standing in the way of executing orders” (2003).

If the founders of the ISM strongly believe in the morality and effectiveness of nonviolent resistance, its volunteers also admit that they would not be involved with this movement if it were not nonviolent⁵. However, due to the particularly loose system of recruiting unscreened volunteers (who can enlist from anywhere in the world through the ISM website or local ISM groups), ideological ties between activists are inherently weak (Seitz 2003: 65). Some volunteers pursue nonviolence as a way of life, others are for Palestinian solidarity and fighting occupation, others are from Jewish and Zionist groups who “feel sorry for Israel”, in addition to peace and justice groups from Christian churches who claim to be “here to make peace”, and anarchists or adherents to the anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist movements (Arraf and Shapiro 2003: 67-68).

During the two-day intensive training that all new volunteers have to take on their arrival, a few hours are dedicated to the theory and practice of nonviolent resistance. A number of related rules are spelt out, such as the interdiction to touch or verbally abuse soldiers or settlers, or to use anything that could be used as or considered as a weapon. A strong focus on communication is another essential element of nonviolence, and the ISM trainers insist on the necessity to do everything openly, and with respect for all people. The rest of the weekend is spent introducing elements of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and local cultural sensitiveness, spelling out strategic and tactical ground rules (legal information, media strategy, affinity group formation, etc), and engaging in practical role plays and exercises.

The two weeks I spent as a participant observer in the role of a “normal” volunteer with the ISM enabled me to verify that the principle of nonviolent intervention is clearly followed on the ground. One example demonstrates the impact that nonviolent action makes in the mind of the Israeli occupation forces. When 41 internationals within the ISM (including myself) were arrested on August 5th, 2003 for “obstructing the army” by refusing to leave a “closed military area” in the village of Mas’ha⁶, we were all released the following day and praised for our “passive resistance”, except for one Italian volunteer who was expelled from the country for having resisted her arrest “violently”.

The ISM also embodies the principles of a nonviolent way of life in its decentralised decision-making process. The group has a consensus-based structure with a core group that meets once a month but with details left to local affinity groups.

⁵ This assumption is based on interviews which I conducted with short- and long-term volunteers in 2003, confirmed by other interviews carried out the same year by Chermaine Seitz (2003).

⁶ Official arrest declaration that each of the internationals had to sign in Ariel police station. In fact, in a collective effort of international (ISM and IWPS), Israeli (Anarchists Against the Wall and Gush Shalom) and Palestinian activists, the group was attempting (unsuccessfully) to prevent the demolition of the segment of a house which stood in the way of the separation wall under construction. When released (on bail signed by an Israeli guarantor), we were forbidden from re-entering any Palestinian area for the rest of our stay in the country. This event seriously impeded my last two weeks of fieldwork, which were originally going to be spent with another foreign advocacy group (International Women Peace Service) in the Palestinian town of Salfit.

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The most challenging debates concerning the respect for nonviolent rules of engagement concern the ISM's position on Palestinian stone-throwing. While most other international solidarity groups have firmly ruled out the option of taking part in any activity which would involve stone-throwing, ISM volunteers have been caught several times in the middle of a demonstration where children started throwing rocks towards Israeli military jeeps, provoking the army's violent reaction, and the group was divided regarding the appropriate response. Some maintained that the action should be called off immediately, while others decided that their role was to stay and protect Palestinians from Israeli retaliation. I witnessed a confrontational demonstration against the wall near Tulkarem where six internationals were injured by rubber bullets while protecting stone-throwing teenagers, and at the time of my leaving the country, the debate was still continuing on this issue.

2. International advocacy at the service of Palestinian nonviolent activism

This section will examine the relations between internationals and locals in joint popular resistance campaigns, both at the level of action and decision-making. What measures are implemented to ensure that external and internal groups work on the base of equality rather than subordination, so that foreign presence does not compete or replace local action?

The founders of the ISM insist on defining it as a "joint Palestinian-international movement with a Palestinian leadership". Geographically, the main coordination and media office of the ISM (in Beit Sahour) is situated in the same building as the Palestinian Rapprochement Center, and the Palestinian veteran activist G. Andoni is closely supervising the coordination of both organisations.

The decision to be a joint movement has several implications. In terms of decision-making, the highly decentralised ISM relies on working groups in each area of operation, which are coordinated by a mix of local and foreign volunteers selected and trained by the central staff. In addition, to insure that the movement does not compete with or replace internal initiatives, all activities are jointly organised with civil society NGOs or political parties, invited to take part in direct action as equal partners. The ISM is open to collaboration with every local organisation which agrees to abide by the nonviolent rules of engagement. In order to maintain this inclusive line of operation, the ISM has turned down offers of financial assistance from the Palestinian Authority.

Andoni also expressed his wish that in the near future, the definition and functionality of the ISM will be able to shift, from initiating action to supporting locally initiated massive popular resistance. When Palestinians start participating en masse, they will be able to take real ownership of the ISM, but at present, it is still a joint movement, and "the moment you talk about joint international-Palestinian action, foreigners are always tempted to take the lead". He also adds that it is all the more important for the ISM to support local action rather than initiate it, for "international activists come and go, but indigenous people have to live through the consequences of the actions, and

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especially they are the ones to suffer retaliation from the Israeli army or administration”⁷.

During their orientation and training weekend, ISM newcomers are repeatedly instructed to avoid making cultural, political or strategic judgements or creating the impression that they are dictating Palestinians what to do. A ground rule of engagement is the interdiction to interfere in Palestinian domestic issues, no matter what the outsiders feel about who is right or wrong. All work must be done within the norms and traditions of Palestinian society. This means, for example, that female volunteers need to abide by the local customs when it comes to the role of women in the public domain. In a predominantly Muslim society, it is also forbidden to consume alcohol. Similarly, if the movement trains its activists, it avoids using the term “training” in the community, because it would sound insulting to Palestinians. On the contrary, foreigners are “here to learn, not to teach”. Andoni also adds: “we don’t need people making proposals from abroad about how we should organise resistance. In a way, this is like colonialism. The Palestinian people can only accept those who are engaged in the resistance themselves and those who support approaches already existent in the society”. In other words, the ISM tries to encourage the spread of civil-based resistance not by pointing to certain directions, but through the power of example. This can seem like a very subtle distinction to many volunteers, and in the course of my fieldwork, I wanted to observe whether these principles were respected on the ground.

All the activities organised during my observation time were preceded by some kind of consultation with the locals, even for such routine actions as checkpoint watch. However, I noticed some variations in the way relationships were built between a regional ISM team and the local population, according to the style of intervention of each individual ISM regional team. For example, the Jenin and Tulkarem ISM teams adopted a radically different approach to the coordination of a similar type of direct action (forcing a passage through the separation wall to allow Palestinians’ access to their fields). In the first case (Anin, 28/07/03), consultation with representatives from the village (to decide on the date, location and form of action) began just one week in advance, and during the demonstration itself, the internationals stood at the front of the march the whole time while 200 Palestinians remained at the rear of the crowd. In contrast, in the second case (Atil, 01/08/03), preparatory consultation went on for six weeks, and the primary actors of the demonstration were the Palestinians, while the role of the foreigners was to be dispersed among the crowd, and simply cut the razor wires that barred access to the fence, in order to let the local youth go and attack the fence themselves. Moreover, my overall impression of the dynamics of international-Palestinian relationships in summer 2003 was that rather than simply assisting local nonviolent activists, the ISM was often taking over the planning and handling of activities without waiting for Palestinian spontaneous initiatives. The timing of activism was also indicative of the relative dependency on foreigners: the peak period of proactive protest in the OPT is located around Christmas and summer holidays, which is when most foreign volunteers are able to travel to Palestine.

⁷ Interview with G.Andoni, Beit Sahour, July 2003.

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When questioned about their perceptions of the ISM in particular and international solidarity work in general (during formal interviews as well as informal conversations), all West Bank residents greatly value their presence, and would want to “see more of them rather than less”. In the Gaza strip as well, where the ISM have been active for most of the intifada, a group of religious leaders (Imams) reported to the local coordinators that “[their] community considers the ISM as a resistance movement that is no less important in the struggle against the occupation than the armed resistance movements.”⁸

Although Palestinians confess their initial suspicion of the ISM’s intentions, a feeling accentuated by early gaffes and misunderstandings caused by the internationals’ early inexperience⁹, it is recognised that the tragedies of spring 2003, when two ISM members were killed and one was seriously injured while they were performing their protective missions¹⁰, boosted the popularity of the movement in the region. Indeed, it is often said that in the Middle East, people only trust “fighters” ready to die for their cause¹¹.

This high level of sympathy for the work of the ISM has facilitated the integration of foreign volunteers across the OPT, where they are hosted, fed, transported and entertained by local villagers who often firmly refuse any form of payment or compensation. The Palestinian traditional hospitality and generosity reported by all volunteers also raises the need to insure that international organisations do not add an extra burden to local communities, by using the local population’s time, energy and resources without actually offering something worthwhile in exchange. But according to Seitz, none of the Palestinians she met expressed any concerns on that issue; on the contrary, they were full of gratitude for the interest expressed by visiting foreigners in their misery and oppression. The Palestinian critics that she came across were more “political”, related to the allocation of the internationals’ time and energy and to the wider ramifications of their presence. For example, she noted a possible clash between the agenda of the ISM and local expectations from villagers who hoped to be taught English or computer skills, activities which had been used previously in other regions as a way of bonding trust between outsiders and insiders (Seitz 2003). Members of the French solidarity missions CCIPPP¹² also recall some discrepancies between local expectations (they felt like being seen as “saviours”) and their real capabilities, and were concerned for the long-term impact of their temporary

⁸ information retrieved from the ISM yahoo group message board on August 26, 2003

⁹ Seitz reports a number of tactical mistakes and miscommunication blunders committed by the ISM in its first months of activity and up to the episode of the siege of Bethlehem’s Church of Nativity, which have led to some Palestinian distrust in foreigners in the Bethlehem region (2003: 55-56).

¹⁰ On March 16, 2003, Rachel Corrie was fatally run over by a bulldozer while attempting to protect the home of a Palestinian physician from demolition. Two weeks later, Brian Avneri was shot in the face with a high calibre bullet while wearing a fluorescent jacket with reflector stripes and was clearly unarmed with his hands in the air. Only 6 days later, Tom Hurdall was shot in the back of the head by an Israeli military guard tower, while he was escorting Palestinian children out of the line of Israeli fire. He died 10 months later of his injuries

¹¹ Interview with G. Andoni, op.cit.

¹² Campagne Civile Internationale pour la Protection du Peuple Palestinien, [Http://www.protection-palestine.org](http://www.protection-palestine.org)

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protective intervention on Palestinian self-sufficiency¹³. For this reason, international advocacy groups working in the OPT need to pay particular attention to their relationships with local nonviolent forces at the different “tracks” of society, either by planning carefully their “ways out”, or by progressively losing their status of outsiders to become truly Palestinian-led.

3. On-site and off-site intervention:

Assessing the effectiveness of the ISM in Palestine and abroad The success of solidarity movements can only be examined in the light of their self-declared objectives. According to one of its co-founders¹⁴, if the final goal of the ISM is to liberate Palestinians from Israeli occupation, it also has three operational intermediary objectives. These are: 1) to offer protective accompaniment to Palestinian civilians in war-zones and especially local nonviolent activists; 2) to work with Palestinian NGOs and grass-roots to build-up massive civilian-based resistance; and 3) to empower the Palestinians for future negotiations with Israel over the status of the OPT.

The first function of protection is performed through the physical accompaniment of Palestinians endangered by frequent attacks from soldiers or settlers (including children on their way to school), or by acting as human-shields¹⁵ during demonstrations, offering an international presence which often prevents local activists from being injured when they engage in NVDA on their own. When they do not succeed in preventing violence, they can at least report publicly the actions of the occupant, acting as “witnesses of occupation”. The organisation Grassroots International for the Protection of the Palestinian People specialises in this fact-finding function, while the team from International Women’s Peace Service in the village of Hares conducts weekly Human Rights Reports where it documents abuses by the army and settlers.

Although the ISM specialises in direct action (according to its coordinators), it is also ready to perform humanitarian missions in times of crisis. For example, during the Israeli Operation Defensive Shield in March-May 2002, when all Palestinian cities (except Jericho) were re-occupied and placed under curfews, the ISM shifted its focus from proactive to reactive missions, engaging in lifesaving work. Its volunteers were the first foreigners to enter the massively bombarded Jenin refugee camp, and it is also widely known across the OPT for its forced marches through the sieges of Arafat’s headquarters or Bethlehem’s Church of Nativity. Seitz also reports that many inhabitants of the village of Yanun, who had fled their homes under harassment by nearby settlers, came back to their land because they felt safer since the arrival of internationals (Seitz 2003: 64). Additional activities carried out by ISM volunteers which perform the function of protection or interposition include the visit of houses

¹³ These comments were conveyed during conversations with French volunteers, while I was staying in a Hostel in East-Jerusalem which is well-known as the headquarters of international nonviolent “militant tourists”, including by the Israeli authorities who have raided it several times to check visas and harass its residents.

¹⁴ Interview with G. Andoni, op.cit.

¹⁵ It should be noted that the ISM officially rejects the term “human shield” to describe its function, because its leaders associate it with “a special reference to civilians used by military or armed personnel for protection” (ISM press conference statement, May 5, 2003).

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occupied by the army to deliver food and medicine to families detained in their own houses, or “home stay” which consists in sleeping over at suicide bombers’ family homes so that the houses won’t be demolished in revenge.

Negatively, it needs to be acknowledged that there have been a few cases when the intervention of ISM volunteers has made things worse for the Palestinians they were trying to support. For example, an activity like ambulance accompaniment, which was practised a lot during the Spring 2002 campaign, is no longer on the agenda because Palestinians felt that the response of the army was worse when internationals were present. This reaction was interpreted by the ISM as a deliberate attempt by the Israeli army to try and undermine the good relationship between Palestinians and international solidarity groups¹⁶.

Some volunteers also consider the campaign of repression of the ISM by the Israeli government as a testimony of its effectiveness in inspiring Palestinians. By Israel’s own account, since the Operation Defensive Shield hundreds of foreign citizens have been turned back from entry points on suspicion of being linked with “pro-Palestinian groups”, and dozens more have been arrested, among whom 62 ISM members have been deported between 2002 and January 2005. In April 2003, the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) narrowly failed to vote a law making the ISM illegal, but the following month, the Israeli Defence Minister announced that ISM activists would be deported from the Occupied Territories, on the charge of being “provocateurs” and “riot inciters”, and especially after its members in Rafah (Gaza Strip) acknowledged they had briefly met with two British citizens who later carried bombs to a café in Tel Aviv. But the tragic events of Spring 2003, mentioned earlier, have also proved that the function of human shields is becoming less and less relevant, since soldiers are no longer afraid of shooting at internationals, even at the expense of bad media publicity outside Israel. While such tragic incidents should have forced the coordinators to rethink the movement’s strategies, several interviewees felt that this has not been the case.

Perhaps the activities that are the most sustainable in the long-term, even if they do not bring as much media coverage, are those that are more proactive and constructive than confrontational and disruptive. But the format of intervention adopted by the ISM, which is to try and have as many volunteers as possible for a short to medium period of time, and focus on direct action, is not adapted to such projects. Volunteers are required to participate in the ISM campaigns for a minimum of 10 days, but the average time of stay is three weeks. Critics reproach the organisation for bringing in volunteers with an insufficient knowledge of the local context and culture, and who leave the region without having learnt much about Palestinian culture. Moreover, Andoni distinguishes the strategy of the ISM from that of other solidarity groups by the decision to adapt their areas of operation to the “hot spots” of the moment. For example, while they were active in major cities like Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jerusalem during the operation Defensive Shield (2002), “the minute the army re-liberated these areas we realised that there was more urgent need elsewhere and so we decided to shift homes to Nablus, Tulkarem, Jenin and Gaza”.

¹⁶ Interviews with ISM volunteers, July-August 2003.

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Other advocacy groups are more specialised in long-term projects that can be sustained once the internationals are gone, even if they do not bring as much media coverage. The concept chosen by groups such as the International Women Peace Service (IWPS) and the Christian Peacemakers Team (CPT) provides an alternative way of supporting Palestinian nonviolent resistance. Each with its own specificities (IWPS accepts only women, CPT is run by North American Peace Churches), both groups have chosen to have a permanent residence in a particular area where they have been called for by locals (IWPS in Hares, CPT in Hebron), and to rely on a very small number of highly-trusted well-trained activists coming for several months at a time. This enables them to develop long-term relations with the local population and to work on well-prepared projects that really fit local needs and customs.

Rather than weakening the movement, this sub-division of solidarity work between different groups and networks, each with its own style and local contacts, enables a complementarity in action which can only benefit the development of NVR in Israel-Palestine. Far from competing with each other, these autonomous solidarity groups collaborate with efficiency, participate in each other's activities, and manage to avoid duplicate action through a pertinent geographical repartition (for example, the ISM does not have any presence in Hebron because the CPT is already there). Most demonstrations I observed in summer 2003 were attended by members of different solidarity groups (ISM, CPT, IWPS, the French CCIPPP), who participated with their own rules of engagement (degree of confrontation allowed by the group, etc) and kept separate affinity groups, and distinctive signs of affiliation (CPT caps, CCIPPP tee-shirt, etc) but mixed as a unified body for strategic meetings and the demonstration itself. And for most Palestinians, the plethora of international groups are lumped together under the catch-all "ajanib" (foreigners) rather than distinguished by the array of confusing acronyms in the field (Seitz 2003: 51).

Concerning the third objective of the ISM (I will come back to the second one later on), assisting Palestinian empowerment, Andoni divides it into two components. On the one hand, he defines it as decreasing the level of Israeli control over Palestinians by dismantling the ability of the occupier to control the life of the occupied. And on the other hand, it means helping Palestinians to be the actors of their own lives and taking the initiative instead of simply reacting to Israeli moves.

From my observations during the ISM "Freedom Summer 2003", taken individually, its activities did not really manage to prevent Israelis from controlling the lives of Palestinians. Removing a roadblock or attacking a fence helped to raise the popularity of foreign volunteers among the local population, but they were invariably rebuilt the day after, and no case has been recorded where the ISM successfully prevented a house from being destroyed. However, since my last visit to the occupied territories, there has been a dramatic increase in popular resistance in Palestinian villages, illustrated especially by the so-called "third intifada against the apartheid wall". Several of these grassroots campaigns have claimed a few legal victories, the Israeli Supreme Court ruling against the planned route of the security barrier in cases where

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the expropriation of Palestinian land could not be justified by the security needs of Israeli citizens and settlers (Ghalili 2004).¹⁷

Asked whether in his opinion the popular struggle was reaching its goals, a local village leader considers that “in the end, Israel still building the wall. But this will not happen without a price; the world and Israelis are starting to realise the oppression of this wall” (Daraghmeh 2005). And this is where the ISM can bring its greatest contribution to the movement, by tapping into the resource that internationals can provide: global attention (Arraf and Shapiro 2003: 74). One of the most important successes claimed by the ISM concerns indeed its media coverage. The movement’s media section is quite successful in bringing the world’s attention to its activities, by attracting journalists to its demonstrations or sending reports to a worldwide audience. Volunteers proudly cite the fact that the issue of the wall became more prominent in the Israeli and international public arena after the “2003 freedom summer” intensive campaign by the ISM and other groups on this issue¹⁸.

Part of this success is due to the relentless effort of the media and campaigning work performed by the ISM regional teams overseas. Indeed, according to ISMers’ own account, “militant tourism” in Palestine is only one facet of their movement, and at least half of their activities take place outside the “holy land”, in the volunteers’ own countries. Developing international support through lobbying, educational and public awareness campaigns in the United States and in Europe is a crucial part of the organisation’s work. Since 2001, ISM support groups have been created in 35 countries, by veterans of the movement, in order to establish media contacts to relay field information, organise speaking tours for returning activists or visiting Palestinians, and fundraising in order to send more volunteers (Seitz 2003: 64). The organisation estimates that half of its several thousand volunteers have come from the United States, 1/4 of whom are of Jewish origin¹⁹ (although these figures are only approximate as the ISM lost its statistics database after an Israeli raid of its media office in May 2003). Therefore, they are in good position for lobbying the most influential of Israel’s allies, especially by acting as a powerful alternative Jewish voice (as a counter-power to the pro-Israel lobbies such as AIPAC) within the United States. Judging by the persistent pro-Israel stance of the Bush administration as well as in the US Congress, it seems that the ISM and other Jewish anti-occupation groups still represent a silenced dissident voice, and local campaigns to claim justice for the murdered US-citizen Rachel Corrie have not met the same success as the family and

¹⁷ For example, in Budrus, in March 2004, after several months of popular struggle, the Israeli DCO was forced to design the wall much closer to the green line, confiscating only 38 dunums of land (100 olive trees) instead of the 1,000 (3,000 olive trees) initially planned. In Azawiya, a ruling was issued on June 25th, 2004 to halt to the construction work, motivated by proofs of disproportionate use of force by the Israeli armed forces, causing hundreds of injuries and growing international concern.

¹⁸ The demonstrations which I witnessed in Summer 2003 were for example reported in such prominent newspapers as the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Guardian, Le Monde, etc.

¹⁹ The rest of the contingent comes from Canada and the United Kingdom, though an increasing number of ISM volunteers travel from mainland Europe and Asia (mainly Japan). The ISM attracts mostly native English speakers because it is the working language of the movement, and French or Italian speaking volunteers, for example (the two non-English speaking nationalities most represented in the nonviolent movement in Palestine), prefer to work with their own networks, such as Campagne Civile Internationale pour la Protection du Peuple Palestinien (CCIPPP).

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friends of the fellow-ISM member Tom Hurndall in the UK (who obtained the legal pursuit and prosecution of the IDF soldier who shot him to death).

Finally, the remaining goal behind the actions conducted by the ISM, conjointly with local actors, is to increase the number of Palestinians actively resisting the occupation by nonviolent means. According to Andoni, the first step is for Palestinians to perceive the initiatives led by the ISM as something positive, and the second one is for them to feel inspired and decide to participate or create their own forms of civil-based resistance.

For example, the purpose of the summer campaigns of 2003 and 2004 (called Freedom Summers after M.L.King's 1964 demonstrations) was to proactively organise demonstrations and marches to raise public awareness on the effects of the separation wall on Palestinian lives, and by the same token to encourage and inspire local Palestinians to join the struggle.

Did such campaigns reach their intended target? It is difficult to assess the level of support for the ISM's activities across Palestinian land, and even harder to measure their real impact on the increasing appeal of popular resistance. According to Arraf and Shapiro, "at a minimum level, [the presence of the ISM on the ground] has greatly raised the morale of the Palestinians" (2003: 69), and in Mustapha Barghouti's opinion, demonstrations led by the internationals have "illustrated to the Palestinians the power of peaceful, nonviolent resistance to the occupation, and have perhaps empowered them to use these very methods" (2002). It is very improbable that the ISM and other groups have made any impact on the Palestinian leadership, though, even if Arafat has been speaking highly of their actions; but it could be argued that this is not the purpose of such groups, which were born as "grassroots movements to side with ordinary people in their everyday struggle for freedom"²⁰.

What can be ascertained is that the modest legal victories of civil resistance in villages threatened by the wall have encouraged others to use the same techniques. A member of the local popular committee in Budrus reported that during his administrative detention, leaders from all the factions told him that the "Budrus method is good" and that they had to reconsider their methods (Rapaport 2005). Similar reports come from Bil'in, where observers have also noted the participation of Hamas officials in Friday demonstrations. Interviewed there by an Israeli journalist, the alleged Hamas leader in the West Bank declared, "we have tried everything, and we will try this way too". During the campaign for the February 2006 Palestinian elections, the Bil'in anti-wall marches have even become an active arena of electioneering, as the contending parties all sent high-ranking candidates to march at the front, which is another sign that the village has become very much of a symbol for all Palestinians²¹. Bil'in organisers have also been invited by others villages to help them organise popular demonstrations, deemed successful because they "attract media and foreign and Israeli supporters and reduce violence" (Daraghmeh 2005). On February 20-21, 2006, an international conference organised by the "Bil'in joint project of struggle against the

²⁰ Interview with G.Andoni, op.cit.

²¹ Gush Shalom online, January 21, 2006.

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fence” attracted several hundred participants from all parts of the West Bank, coming to debate collective strategies of non-violent resistance and to brainstorm for new ideas and methods²².

With the intensification of the struggle against the wall, it thus seems that Andoni’s predictions concerning the future of the ISM are slowly being realised, and in Burdus, for example, the strategy chosen by local leaders has turned over the dynamics of foreign-Palestinian relationships in NVR. In an interview, a local resident recalled that “in the north, from Jenin until Budrus, there were Israeli and international demonstrators, supported by Palestinians. But here we think that it is our problem and that we have to defend our land and do something, and the Israeli and international protestors are only supporting us. We are very grateful for [their] support, but the Palestinians have to make a stand” (Levy 2004). This denotes a radical change of situation in comparison with the period in which I last visited the West Bank in 2003. Local developments on the ground in the coming few weeks and months, and especially the outcome of the Israeli Supreme Court ruling on the legality of the wall on Bil’in land, will decisively influence the future expansion of this grassroots movement, and eventually the acknowledgement of its efficiency by the newly Hamas-dominated Palestinian leadership.

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²² International Middle East Media Center, February 20, 2006