

## “Christian Peacemaker Teams in Israel/Palestine: Beyond Accompaniment”

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### Abstract

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This article examines and analyzes Christian Peacemaker Teams' (CPT) attempt to reduce violence and foster justice in the Israeli-occupied West Bank through third-party nonviolent intervention. Specifically, it examines CPT's accompaniment strategies and solidarity activities in support of Palestinians under occupation such as nonviolent resistance, advocacy, and support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. CPT's accompaniment practices have resulted in safer passage for Palestinian school children and protection for farmers, shepherds, and the Palestinian communities threatened by Israeli soldiers and settlers. Other nonviolent direct action in solidarity with Palestinians has supported civil resistance against the Occupation. CPT's partisanship in this regard has drawn criticism and hostility from Israelis and others. CPT's choice of strategies is driven by its foundation of faith and Christian calling to work in solidarity with the most vulnerable populations. There is certainly a niche for CPT's brand of nonviolent intervention in Palestine, but it will not appeal to all organizations interested in protecting marginalized communities with the perception of impartiality.

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**Keyword:** Accompaniment, Nonviolence, Pacifism, Solidarity, Palestine, Christian Peacemaker Teams

### 1. Introduction

Understanding the tremendous cost of war drives activists and scholars to find ways to end conflict and foster justice. Once on the fringes and widely seen as idealistic and naïve, nonviolence is gaining credibility as a political action tool. The social science research of Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth (2008) offers sound support for the proposition that nonviolent resistance is effective in bringing about political change. There is also growing recognition of the utility of “third-party nonviolent intervention,” also known as “international protective accompaniment” or “unarmed civilian protection,” which is now practiced by a number of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), the focus of this article. Inspired and instructed by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s successful use of nonviolent direct action such as boycotts, marches, strikes, and nonviolent civil disobedience, a new wave of international/third-party activists began to intervene in conflict situations around the world in the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

According to Liam Mahony (1997), international protective accompaniment involves “the presence of foreign actors with local actors for two purposes: to protect those local actors from attack, and to encourage them to engage in democratic civilian activities” (p. 207). Ivan Booth and Lee A. Smithey (2007) explain that “[n]onviolent interventionists dissuade parties from harming one another by interjecting a third party into the situation whom one or both sides have reasons not to harm” (p. 40). Predominantly Western volunteers from North America and Europe serve as the buffering third party. Concerned about negative sanctions from Western governments or a tarnished reputation through the press, disputants often refrain from using violence against or in the presence of Westerners.

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As the model evolves, however, more and more local activists are joining international teams on the ground in an effort to increase their capacity to provide security for their own communities and develop peaceful and sustainable solutions to end ongoing conflicts. Peace Brigades International (PBI) began their ground breaking accompaniment work in Guatemala in the 1980s. Since then, NGOs such as Nonviolent Peaceforce, Witness for Peace, SweFOR, Operation Dove, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), International Solidarity Movement (ISM), International Women's Peace Service, and Christian Peacemaker Teams have mobilized international volunteers to accompany vulnerable populations and practice other forms of nonviolent intervention in conflict zones. "While these organizations have unique histories and strategic playbooks, they share family resemblances as each goes only where invited by local nonviolent actors, seeks to support locals rather than lead..., and heavily employs accompaniment" (Eddy, 2014, p. 443). Protective accompaniment, observation and monitoring, interposition, and presence are the principal methods used by these organizations (Boothe and Smithey 2007, pp. 42-43).

In recent years, the United Nations has turned its attention to this growing practice of nonviolent intervention.<sup>2</sup> In October 2016, the UN held a special session to explore "unarmed civilian protection[as] a method for the direct protection of civilians, for localized violence reduction and for supporting local peace infrastructures." During the session, Tiffany Easthom, the executive director for Nonviolent Peaceforce, challenged the UN Security Council "to ensure the centrality of unarmed strategies in PoC [protection of civilian] mandates." Easthom underlined the critical need to reduce violence, protect civilians, and achieve sustainable ends to conflicts by pointing out that civilian fatalities during conflicts now outnumber those of soldiers, and over 65 million people have been displaced and are fleeing from war and persecution.<sup>3</sup> The discussion prompted inquiry about the availability of data and information about unarmed civilian protection flowing from research or observations from the field. Acknowledging that it is important to have evidence of what works and where it works, Easthom responded that this body of research is growing among both academics and practitioners as they look at the process on the ground and try to learn from it (UN Web TV, 2016).

This article advances scholarship in third-party nonviolent intervention by offering an independent analysis of the nonviolence work done by Christian Peacemaker Teams. In particular, it focuses on Christian Peacemaker Teams' attempt to reduce violence and foster justice in the Israeli-occupied West Bank since 1995. The relevance of CPT's work extends into various areas of inquiry. CPT serves as an example of a faith-based NGO practicing principled pacifism. CPT has served as a model for other nonviolence organizations. CPT was the first international NGO to offer ongoing third-party nonviolent intervention in the West Bank and clearly identified a growing need for the practice as there are now around half a dozen NGOs offering protective accompaniment and beyond in this Israeli-occupied territory. In many ways, the work of CPT is representative of the strategies adopted by other nonviolence NGOs in the region. An examination of CPT's strategies for nonviolent direct action in Israel/Palestine offers insight into the organization's rationale behind certain choices and the costs and benefits of each. CPT goes beyond accompaniment to work in solidarity with the marginalized Palestinian population, a model defended by CPT activists but one that, in its entirety, would not work for all those interested in unarmed intervention in conflict zones.

## 2. Overview of Christian Peacemaker Teams in Israel/Palestine

Christian Peacemaker Teams emerged in 1986 from the resolve of the traditional peace churches – Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, and Quakers – to practice their faith in Jesus as the way to peace and to embrace and develop creative methods of organized nonviolence to confront militarism and promote social change. North American Anabaptists rose to Ron Sider's challenge at the Mennonite Conference in Strasbourg, France in 1984 calling upon these Christian pacifists to be willing to risk their own lives in pursuit of peace. In his speech at the conference, Sider challenged this community of Christians to "prayerfully and nonviolently place ourselves between the weak and the oppressor. Do we have the courage to move from the back lines of isolationist pacifism to the front lines of nonviolent peacemaking?" (Sider, 1984).

<sup>2</sup>Ellen Funari (2017) writes that the UN's first official reference to "unarmed civilian protection" was made in a December 2014 UN General Assembly resolution. "The following year, a U.N. report noted that 'unarmed civilian protection...has especially proven its effectiveness to protect women and girls'" (10).

<sup>3</sup>In 2017, according to the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, an unprecedented **65.6 million** people worldwide have been forcibly displaced, fleeing from war and persecution. Among them are nearly **22.5 million refugees**, over half of whom are children.

The creation of CPT was in response to this call. Since then, CPT has sent teams practicing spiritually-based or principled nonviolence<sup>4</sup> to conflict zones around the world and maintains offices for the Support Team in the United States and Canada. At different times, the organization has served inner city and indigenous communities in North America and vulnerable populations in Haiti, Mexico, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. CPT has maintained ongoing project teams in the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia, Iraqi Kurdistan, and in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Established in 1995, the Palestine Project serves communities in and around the West Bank city of Hebron (*Al Khalil* in Arabic) and is CPT's longest-running project. CPT's Palestine Project has consisted of two teams of "Peacemaker Corps" members (CPTers) providing a long-term international presence in the West Bank: the Hebron Team since 1995 to reduce the violence between Israeli settlers and soldiers and the Palestinian residents and the At-Tuwani Team from 2004 to 2011 to prevent attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian schoolchildren, farmers, and shepherds (Christian Peacemaker Teams [CPT], 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

CPT established the Palestine Project at the request of Hebron's Palestinian mayor, who invited CPT to "accompany the people here as they struggle with the daily violence caused by the Israeli occupation" (Kern, 2009, pp. 98-99; 2010, p. 19). The invitation came a year after the 1994 Al-Ibrahimi mosque massacre, in which settler Baruch Goldstein killed 29 worshippers and injured over 125 more during Muslim prayer. In the aftermath of the massacre, the Israeli authorities imposed a crippling 40-day curfew on the Palestinian residents of the city, and IDF soldiers detained or shot Palestinians found breaking curfew, throwing stones, or protesting in the streets (Marshall, 1994). CPT's initial plan was to set up a project for five months, but the need for a third-party presence has persisted, and the Palestine Project has been in place with little interruption for over two decades. Today, CPT's Palestine Team members "stand with Palestinians and Israeli peace groups engaged in nonviolent opposition to Israeli military occupation, collective punishment, settler harassment, home demolitions and land confiscation" (CPT, 2015b).

Christian Peacemaker Teams activists employ various tactics in their attempts to reduce violence and support social change in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. CPTers constitute an international presence and offer protective accompaniment to Palestinians and, on rare occasion, to vulnerable Israelis. They document and report violent, coercive, or unjust behavior. They work actively to create international awareness about abuses on the ground. CPTers also partner with Palestinian and Israeli activists in support of local peacemaking efforts and institutions, thus exemplifying CPT's current motto "Building partnerships to transform violence and oppression." They join local initiatives in nonviolent direct action such as rebuilding homes after demolition, replanting destroyed crops, participating in peaceful protests, and engaging in civil disobedience. They also regularly intervene physically with their own bodies to create an obstacle between opposing parties in certain threatening situations, which epitomized CPT's original motto of "Getting in the Way."

CPTers call upon other Christians in their home communities to support CPT programs through prayer, money, and time. Support for CPT initially came from the traditional peace churches but has spread to other denominations as well. On the ground in the West Bank, CPT also engages in interfaith cooperation with Muslims and Jews and has recently incorporated Muslim associate members on the team. The Palestine Team must collaborate regularly with religious and secular Palestinians, Jews, and internationals in efforts to raise consciousness and carry out nonviolent direct action. A brochure from CPT's Hebron office declares:

Because we believe in a God of mercy and justice, we are not neutral about situations where one group is being oppressed by another. We do not affiliate ourselves with any particular political agenda, but we do believe it is our calling as Christians to stand in solidarity with the downtrodden in conflict situations... (CPT, 2010b). In this way, CPT's efforts in the West Bank are generally in support of rights and justice for the Palestinians, who are in a much weaker position than the Israelis who control the area with a heavily armed military and settler presence. CPT does not espouse a particular political solution, such as a one- or two-state solution, to the conflict. Instead, the organization supports local efforts to produce a nonviolent, just resolution that would recognize Palestinian rights. CPT also opposes violence committed by any individual or party to the conflict, believing "that both violent acts and unjust acts demean the image of God in human beings" (CPT, 2010b).

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<sup>4</sup>For a comparison of CPT's principled nonviolence and International Solidarity Movement's pragmatic nonviolence, see Matthew P. Eddy (2014).

### 3. CPT's Strategies for Nonviolent Intervention in Israel/Palestine

CPT partners with local – both Palestinian and Israeli – and international NGOs to carry out strategies to protect victims and enforce international norms through on-the-ground intervention in Palestine. These activities, designed to reduce violence against and bring justice to Palestinians, consist of accompaniment of vulnerable civilians; nonviolent resistance and advocacy for Palestinians; and participation in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. CPT refers to all of these tactics as forms of public witness.<sup>5</sup>

#### 3.1 CPT's Accompaniment Strategies

Accompaniment is a vital part of CPT work in the West Bank. The Palestine Team has identified it as such in their 2013 “Strategic Plan.” One of CPT Palestine’s goals is “to provide accompaniment and support to Palestinians who may be in a vulnerable position with respect to Israeli security forces and settlers and to respond to emergency requests” (CPT, 2013a). CPT maintains an active nonviolent presence in the H2 (Old City) zone of Hebron and provides accompaniment to various communities in Hebron, the South Hebron Hills including Masafer Yatta (Firing Zone 918), a Palestinian-populated area designated a live-ammunition firing zone by Israeli authorities (CPT, 2015a). The Palestine Team chose their apartments on al Shuhada Street in a part of Hebron central to the conflict at a critical time when there was no ongoing international presence. Their early arrival on the scene has allowed them to develop their own brand of involvement following the lead of local Palestinian partners. Over the years, CPTers have experienced the drastic transformation of the neighborhood as a result of settler expansion and the imposition of “security measures” by the Israeli authorities. With the 1997 Hebron Protocol dividing the city between control by the Palestinian Authority (H1) and Israel (H2), CPTers found themselves living within the boundaries of H2 (Rick Polhamus, email, May 22, 2014).

Today, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) snipers perch on the roof of the building across the street from CPT’s apartments. Directly beside the entrance to CPT’s apartments, an Israeli security fence composed of barbed wire and razor wire stops the flow of traffic that had previously existed on this major thoroughfare once bustling with commerce. In 2001, with the Second *Intifada*,<sup>6</sup> the Israeli authorities placed crippling restrictions on the Palestinian population living on al Shuhada Street. B’Tselem (2011) reports that the IDF prohibits Palestinian vehicular (and in some places pedestrian) traffic on al Shuhada and “adjacent streets, thereby creating a contiguous strip of land in the center of Hebron, from the Kiryat Arba settlement in the east to the Jewish cemetery in the west....” The army welded doors shut, and hundreds of homes, shops, and warehouses along al Shuhada Street were abandoned or closed by military order.

CPT’s 24-hour presence is intentional “in an effort to deter violence and to decrease... harassment and mistreatment. CPT [also] conducts daily patrols in areas in and around the Old City where there is a heavy presence of the Israeli military and Israeli settlers” (CPT, 2010a). CPT patrols lend support to the handful of Palestinian merchants who have managed to keep shops open in Hebron’s Old City. CPT’s presence provides encouragement to these shopkeepers and acts as a deterrent to the IDF practice of randomly detaining Palestinian shoppers and pedestrians in the area. When soldiers do stop Palestinians on the streets or pull them from the shops, CPTers can be reached quickly and are able to record and monitor the interaction, which can also lead to a de-escalation and early resolution of potentially violent situations. CPT’s presence supports local nonviolent resistance, whether in the form of Palestinian shopkeepers refusing to be forced out of their stores or when the neighborhood comes together through nonviolent direct action, as they did on February 19, 2017, for the “Open Shuhada Street” vigil. (CPT, 2017a) CPTers invest much of their time in accompanying students and teachers to and from school on a daily basis. Palestinians in Hebron and the South Hebron Hills have faced major obstacles to securing the uninterrupted education of their children.

At the worst of times, during the Second *Intifada*, which began in September 2000, the Israelis imposed curfews that disrupted the education of thousands of Palestinian students living in Hebron’s Old City and near the Jewish settlements of Kiryat Arba and Givat Ha Harsina. During this period, schools were closed for days at a time, and many were vandalized.

<sup>5</sup>Some activists use the term “public witness” narrowly to describe silent vigils held in protest over an issue. However, CPT employs it, and it is used throughout this work, as synonymous with all forms of nonviolent direct action.

<sup>6</sup> Violent clashes between Palestinians and Israelis became a regular facet of life during the Second *Intifada* (2000-2006). Over 4,000 people died, many of them in suicide bombings carried out by Palestinian men and women.

Teachers and students were detained regularly, and some were arrested (Kern, 2009, pp. 187-190). Some impediments have persisted over time, including soldiers' raids on schools, the use of tear gas and percussion grenades against students as forms of collective punishment for stone throwing. Israeli soldiers and settlers physically and verbally assault Palestinian students and teachers with impunity. Israeli attacks have damaged and destroyed Palestinian educational facilities throughout the West Bank (Kern, 2009; CPT, 2016; Defense of Children, 2016; UNRWA, 2016). In a 2016 account of "education in emergencies," the UN Refugee Agency, UNRWA, reports the need in the West bank and Gaza for "specifically trained psychosocial counsellors [who] work with deeply traumatized children to recover and move on with their lives" due to the conditions.

Since 2001, school patrols have been a principal undertaking of CPTers in Hebron and later in At-Tuwani in the South Hebron Hills. The Palestine Team employs various strategies to offer accompaniment to as many students and teachers as possible. These include direct accompaniment, general school patrol, and checkpoint watch. The children from the South Hebron Hills village of Tuba who walked several kilometers to and from their primary school building in neighboring At-Tuwani warranted direct accompaniment. By far, the shortest route to the school from this village passed between the Ma'on settlement and an outpost settlement, Hill 833, which the settlers called Havat Ma'on (Kern, 2010, p. 258). Settlers frequently came down to the path travelled by the children and attacked them. Initially invited by activists from Ta'ayush, CPT and this joint Israeli-Palestinian organization worked together to accompany the children on a few occasions in 2003. From 2004 to 2011, two CPTers at a time from the Palestine Team lived in At-Tuwani. One of their primary goals was to ensure the children's safe passage along this path so that they could continue their education without the intimidation and violence that might lead to their withdrawal from school or even forced migration out of the area. During this time, the CPTers shared this task with Italian volunteers of Operation Dove, who also took up residence in At-Tuwani for this project. On September 29, 2004, two days after the official joint CPT/Operation Dove At-Tuwani team was established, masked settlers staged a morning attack against the schoolchildren and the CPTers accompanying them. They threw stones at the children. They beat CPTer Kim Lamberty, giving her a broken elbow and injuring her head and knee. They used chains and baseball bats to beat CPTer Chris Brown and left him with a punctured lung and head injuries (Kern 2010, 258-260). This attack prompted both an Israeli and an international outcry.

The Israeli Knesset Committee for the Rights of the Child held hearings and ordered the army to accompany the children. At-Tuwani leadership attributed this success to the presence of CPT and Operation Dove and the international attention brought by these organizations (Kern, 2010, pp. 200-201). The Palestinian children of Tuba have now walked to and from school with an Israeli military escort since 2004. However, the condition for this was that internationals stop accompanying these children. So, instead, CPTers and Doves set up a daily "patrol from a distance at each end of the route...[to observe and document]...whether the soldiers arrived on time, whether they walked with the children instead of making them run behind the jeep, and whether they protected them from settlers" (Kern, 2009, pp. 200-201). The conduct of the military accompaniers has varied. CPT then regularly submitted their findings about the operation to Ta'ayush and Machsom (Checkpoint) Watch, who in turn submitted the information to the Israeli Knesset Committee on the Rights of the Child (Kern, 2009, p. 201). CPT was part of this constant school patrol for at-Tuwani until 2011, when the team brought to a close its ongoing presence in the village. The school patrol continues today under Operation Dove, and CPTers come in to assist when needed. CPT touted this move as a success because of increased help for the villagers among other NGOs (CPTNet, 2011). However, the decision to transfer the At-Tuwani Team back to Hebron also stemmed from a reduction in the number of CPTers serving on the overall Palestine Project. CPT Administrative Coordinator Mark Frey (telephone interview, March 14, 2014) states that, ideally, the Palestine Team needs "six to eight people on the ground at any given time to respond to the work that is put in front of them in a healthy and sustainable way," but staffing levels for 2012 averaged out to 4.7 members at one time and in 2013, to 4.5 members, which would have been too low to maintain both teams. Today in the South Hebron Hills, CPTers provide direct accompaniment to school children and their "bus" driver on the way to and from the Al-Fakheit School in their all-terrain jeep. Israeli authorities designated a live-ammunition firing zone in the area known as Firing Zone 918.

CPTers rotate throughout the week with volunteers of Operation Dove, ISM, and EAPPI to provide daily accompaniment for these children due to the fear of Israeli soldiers (Jonathan Brenneman, email, October 28, 2013). CPT and their partners have met with success with this operation. However, real challenges exist when the team of internationals is too small. CPTer Jonathan Brenneman (public address, February 27, 2014, Wilmington, Ohio), who has served in Hebron, relates how the Palestinian bus driver was detained by IDF in October and November 2013, during times when CPTers were not available for accompaniment. On one of these occasions, eight soldiers not only detained him, but also “verbally abused him, and then beat him on his abdomen, face, and back. Afterwards, they forced him to drive over spikes used to stop vehicles at army checkpoints to puncture the SUV’s tires” (CPTNet, 2013b).

As the number of CPTers is limited, they also supplement direct accompaniment with a general school patrol. CPTers patrol the streets at specific times of the day when students are walking to and from school. They watch for concerns and interact with the children in appropriate ways to build their trust. In this way, CPTers are not accompanying specific students on a regular basis, but rather are creating a consistent international presence along the school route.

Another tactic is to situate CPTers at strategic checkpoints during the same times to monitor the behavior of the soldiers. In March 2013, CPT reported that Two of the schools attended by children living in and around the Old City lie within the “H2” area of Hebron, which is under the control of Israeli soldiers and police. In order to reach their schools, children and teachers must pass through metal detectors. Soldiers frequently search their backpacks and briefcases. High school students and teachers are sometimes subject to body searches, and frequent ID checks often make both teachers and students late for school. . . . CPT monitors two of the checkpoints used each school day by children and teachers attending school in H2 (2013b).

CPTers count the number of schoolchildren passing through the checkpoints and observe and document their treatment. CPT reports human rights abuses against the children at these checkpoints to organizations such as Save the Children and UNICEF (Jonathan Brenneman, public address, February 27, 2014, Wilmington, Ohio). If CPTers witness mistreatment, they also intervene with inquiries or even the interposition of their bodies between a child and a threat, and they document the incident. In their 2013 “Strategic Plan,” the Palestine Team identified intervention during human rights violations as one of their objectives within the accompaniment goal. CPTers also actively engage Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints in conversation whenever possible in an effort to build relationships with Israelis who are doing their military service in the Occupied West Bank. Based on his observations on the ground and interviews with activists, Diego Checa Hidalgo (2015) concludes that “it seems evident that the presence of CPT teams. . . at checkpoints reduces police and army harassment against Palestinian youth and adults and facilitates their passage through the checkpoints. . . in Hebron’s Old City” (36).

Although school children in Hebron and the South Hebron Hills villages are a major focus of CPT work, CPTers also accompany adults in many situations. Over the years, farmers and shepherds in At-Tuwani have been among the most vulnerable, subjected to physical attacks and destruction of farm equipment and crops by extremist settlers. From 2004 to 2011 the joint team of CPT and Operation Dove regularly accompanied the farmers and shepherds of At-Tuwani. One of the worst threats for the shepherds occurred in 2005, when settlers from the Havat Ma’on outpost laid poison-covered barley and later poison pellets in the hills and valleys around Ma’on where the sheep grazed and near a Palestinian water source. “Since the villagers’ flocks not only represented their main source of income, but was also a staple of their diet, the loss was catastrophic. . . . [I]n the end, the villagers from At-Tuwani and Mufakara lost more than one hundred animals” (Kern, 2009, p. 203). CPTers worked with the villagers, the Doves, and Israeli groups to pick up the pellets in an effort to clean up the countryside for the sheep and goats. When not on school patrol, CPTers and Doves accompanied shepherds as they grazed their flocks near the settlements and farmers as they prepared the land and planted and harvested crops. “Regaining grazing and farmland, from which settlers had driven them, sometimes for years, became one of the key goals of the. . . campaign waged by the South Hebron Hills villagers” (Kern, 2009, p. 202). Joint CPT-Dove accompaniment over the years has contributed to the success of this effort. At different times, At-Tuwani villagers serving on the South Hebron Hills Popular Committee for Nonviolent Resistance have credited the work done by CPT and Operation Dove with the reclamation of much of their land through nonviolence and invaluable support for the local nonviolent resistance movement (author’s CPT delegation experience, 2011; CPT, 2011a).

In addition, CPT has had occasion to offer accompaniment and other forms of assistance to Israelis, although these are much less frequent due in large part to the less predictable and unannounced acts of violence perpetrated by Palestinian militant groups like Hamas. The most touted example is CPT's accompaniment of Israeli bus #18 in Jerusalem in 1996. After Hamas bombed the #18 bus twice on two successive Sunday mornings, CPTers accompanied Israeli riders in the morning on the following Sunday. Prior to this action, the team condemned the bombings and announced their intentions to ride bus #18 to Israeli police and all Palestinian political movements (CPTNet, 1996, pp. 52-53). CPTer Greg Rollins recalls a number of incidents in which he stepped in to protect Israelis and their property during his three years in Palestine beginning in 2001. These include a time he stood in the way of a Palestinian woman attempting to stab Israeli soldiers and another occasion when he stepped in to stop Palestinians from damaging Israeli vehicles (Rollins, personal communication, November 15, 2011, Chicago). CPT's ability to come to the aid of Israelis, however, is hampered by CPT's relationship with most settlers in Hebron and the South Hebron Hills. These settlers do not turn to CPTers for help. Instead they view the presence of CPT and other internationals with hostility. It has been very difficult for CPTers to develop a rapport with settlers, despite their best efforts (Polhamus, personal communication, February 8, 2013, Wilmington, Ohio). Patrick Coy (2012) argues that this distrust also stems from CPT's partisanship in favor of the Palestinians and the direct threat the activists pose to the settlers' quality of life.

### 3.2 Beyond Accompaniment: CPT's Solidarity with the Oppressed

"...CPT activists become intimately involved in the activities of those they accompany. In many ways,...CPT is a 'solidarity' organisation" (Coy 2012, 9). The work of CPT in Palestine includes support for "Palestinian-led, nonviolent, grassroots resistance to the Israeli occupation and the unjust structures that uphold it [in collaboration] with local Palestinian and Israeli peacemakers..." (CPT, 2015a). By design, the work of CPT crosses the threshold from neutral accompaniment to overt solidarity with the Palestinians under Occupation. CPT's Training Coordinator Kryss Chupp asserts that CPT's work goes beyond accompaniment. CPT has never defined its work as strictly accompaniment. It's more a description of some of the aspects of our work....The work of nonviolence has really been the guiding force, and that often takes the form of accompaniment.... But as distinct from groups like Peace Brigades International, who do define their mission very strictly as an accompaniment,... CPT's mandate and way of working is broader than that direct understanding of accompaniment (interview, June 28, 2013, Chicago).

In addition, CPT has a history of lending a voice to the oppressed and disenfranchised and those with disproportionately less power and less access to media. An article shared at the Peacemaker Corps trainings and echoed by many CPTers states, "we take sides, just as the God of peace, justice and nonviolence takes side" (Dear 2006). "In [the] tradition of Jesus, CPT organizes and encourages nonviolent public witness, sometimes called nonviolent direct action, as a method of social transformation towards an envisioned Kingdom of God" (CPT, 2010c). In many ways, CPT practices solidarity with Palestinians through public witness. Following the lead of Palestinian partners, and at times in conjunction with Israeli and international peace activists, CPTers have helped to plant and harvest crops, replaced olive trees destroyed by settlers, rebuilt homes demolished by the IDF, dismantled barricades and roadblocks, conducted nonviolence training, and helped organize and participated in demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience to support Palestinians' nonviolent efforts. Tricia Gates Brown (2005) points out CPT's practice of "challenging structural violence and domination" (p. 14). This challenge has often involved the organization's use of nonviolent direct action to support Palestinian rights.

CPTers engaged in an early act of civil disobedience at Hebron University in 1996. The bus bombings in Jerusalem and others in Ashkelon and Tel Aviv resulted in general reprisals against the Palestinian population, including the closure of Palestinian universities in the West Bank. Despite the fact that no faculty, staff, or students from Hebron University were ever implicated in the bombings, the Israeli government sealed the university on March 5, 1996, forcing students to meet in schools and other buildings scattered throughout the city of Hebron. CPT began meeting regularly with students and faculty in spring 1996 to discuss strategies for re-opening the university (Kern, 2010, p. 55). On December 9, 1996, nine months after its closure, CPTers physically removed barricades placed by Israeli soldiers to a pedestrian gate and a vehicle entrance to Hebron University. CPTers originally suggested the action. University officials approved it but stipulated that Israeli peace activists also be invited to participate (Lyke & Bock, 2000, p. 10).

CPTers then accompanied approximately 200 students onto the campus in violation of the university's closure. "During the two weeks that followed, students held 'sit-ins' near the front gate in the mornings. Finally on December 28 the University was reopened, perhaps due in part to CPT's urgent action alerts that fostered international pressure" (Lyke & Bock, 2000, pp. 10-12). CPTer Cliff Kindy, who participated in removing the barriers, concluded that CPT's actions to reopen Hebron University also put Palestinian education in the Occupied Territories higher up on the agenda between Israelis and Palestinians (interview, July 1, 2013, North Manchester, Indiana). In addition, during the "sit-ins," CPTers conducted informal nonviolence training for the students to empower them to continue their resistance against the injustices of the Occupation. They referred to these sessions as "English lessons" (since they were taught in English and there was new vocabulary being introduced) in case Israeli soldiers questioned the activities (Kindy).

Today's actions tend to be less spontaneous than those in the early years of CPT in Palestine. Campaigns receive greater planning and coordination with the growing network of partners on the ground. In recent years, the Palestine Team has met with a professional facilitator/ mediator, who is also a CPT reservist, to determine what shape their solidarity and other activities will take. Recent projects include the al Rajabi Building project, "Firing Zone 918/Stand with Masafer Yatta" campaign, and the "Dismantle the Ghetto, Take Settlers out of Hebron" campaign. On September 1, 2013, "CPT attended a demonstration in solidarity with the families from the Wadi al-Hussein area of Hebron, where the al Rajabi house is located. Demonstrators shouted in Arabic, 'No to settlements!' highlighting the possible future of the Rajabi building" (CPTNet, 2013a). The building lies between the Kiryat Arba settlement and Hebron's Old City, and Israeli settlers had been attempting to take it over since 2007. The Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC), a Palestinian organization, organized the demonstration. CPT joined the HRC, Youth Against Settlements and the Hebron Defense Committee, both also Palestinian organizations, as well as ISM and EAPPI to offer their voice of condemnation against the establishment of a new illegal settlement outpost that would further interfere with Palestinian mobility.

Far beyond participation in this single demonstration, CPT was involved in a larger campaign to prevent settlers from taking control of the Rajabi Building. Settlers claimed to have purchased the building occupied it in 2007. The settlers were evicted in 2008, when police determined that some of the documents of the sale were forgeries. In 2012, the CPT Palestine Team "believes that the settlers' intention to occupy the al Rajabi building is motivated by this ideology which would create territorial continuity between the Kiryat Arba settlement and settlements in the center of the Old City. [They] fear this will lead to more detentions and greater restrictions of movement for Palestinians living in the area" (CPTNet, 2012). They were concerned that the IDF will conduct more house searches if settlers were to move in permanently. They also feared that there would be an increase in settler violence against Palestinians, which is what occurred during the 2007-2008 occupation of the building. For these reasons and because the settlement would be illegal under international law, CPT engaged in a campaign in solidarity with and of advocacy for the Palestinians who would be affected by the establishment of a settlement in the al Rajabi building. CPT worked "closely with UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC) and others to stop settlers from occupying the building and to show the consequences for Palestinians the last time the settlers occupied the house" (CPTNet, 2012). Specifically, CPTers conducted and made public interviews with Palestinian families living by the al Rajabi building and Kiryat Arba settlement to learn about their experiences and gauge their fears under the circumstances. CPT worked with HRC to issue a statement condemning the Jerusalem District Court decision to allow settlers to take possession of the building until a Supreme Court decision was handed down and to offer a legal analysis of the proceedings (CPTNet, 2012). In addition, CPT has called on supporters to contact their members of Congress or Parliament about the issue. These and others' efforts drew international attention to this issue, but to their dismay, on March 11, 2014, the Israeli Supreme Court affirmed the ruling of the lower court and within a couple of months, three settler families moved in (Abu Toameh, 2014). In another example of advocacy, CPT circulated a petition via a 2013 "action alert"<sup>7</sup> to persuade "U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry...to demand that the Israeli military cease its ongoing live fire training in the South Hebron Hills and stop trying to expel the more than 1,000 Palestinian shepherd families from their villages" (CPTNet, 2013c). Many of these families "reside in caves and maintain a unique traditional way of life" (ACRI, 2017).

<sup>7</sup>CPT emails action alerts and prayer alerts to supporters to urge them "to take specific action on behalf of threatened individuals and communities" (CPT, 2010d).



CPTers and Israeli peace activists have used the petition, aimed at US policy makers, to pressure Israeli courts deciding the fate of these Palestinians, including 452 children, whose families have lived on this land for generations. These 12 Palestinian communities fall within “Area C,” under full Israeli administrative and military control, and have been designated “Firing Zone 918” by the Israeli administration. The Palestinian residents within eight of these villages face eviction orders, and many of the structures within their communities have demolition orders against them. “The Israeli military wants to force the villagers off their land so they can use the land for live fire training, which is in absolute contravention of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 49, and the Hague Regulations, Articles 46 and 52” (CPTNet 2013a). CPT not only offers regular accompaniment to the Palestinian villagers, such as the school children and their bus driver, but also sponsored the petition on behalf of them along with other NGOs such as Ta’ayush, ISM, and Operation Dove. The pressure from CPT and other global civil society actors contributed to a court-ordered mediation process between the Israeli military and the villages within the firing zone, development benefitting the schools in the villages of al-Fakheit and Jinba, and “access to the area by international humanitarian organizations” (CPTNet, 2014a). In addition, on January 11, 2017, the Israeli Supreme Court issues an *order nisi* on the petition against the forced eviction, “requiring the State to provide alternative propositions within 45 days. The justices stressed they are interested in reaching a compromise that would be acceptable to both sides, and asked that the army submit a new plan detailing its minimum needs for military training in the area” (ACRI, 2017). CPT intends to continue to serve and advocate for the residents of Firing Zone 918 in the South Hebron Hills until their case is resolved.

In 2017, CPT’s Palestine Team stands in solidarity with Palestinian partners and neighbors through the Palestinian-led “Dismantle the Ghetto, Take Settlers Out of Hebron” campaign, which calls for freedom of movement and the evacuation of illegal Israeli settlements in Hebron. “This campaign commemorates the 23rd anniversary of the Ibrahimi Mosque Massacre and subsequent closure of Shuhada Street” (CPT, 2017a). At the request of CPT’s partner organizations, including the Hebron Defense Committee, the Palestine Team has been present on the ground during actions such as a peaceful demonstration through the streets of Hebron in February and planting olive trees on Palestinian land on Land Day in March. The olive tree action took place on Palestinian Land Day and resulted in both an attack by settlers and the arrest of four of the Palestinian activists by Israeli soldiers. CPTers documented the events with camcorders and continue to advocate for the rights of the Palestinians to have access to their land and freedom of movement (CPT, 2017a, 2017c).

CPT’s solidarity with Palestinians under Occupation is not without criticism. Patrick Coy (2012) argues that CPT’s use of nonviolent direct action in solidarity with Palestinians seems to create reprisals from Israeli security forces and even more from Israeli settlers, whose quality of life is threatened by CPT’s work. “CPT’s actions likely represent real economic risks to the settlers whose settling apparently includes an intention to push the Palestinians out of these newly settled and now contested areas through consistent intimidation” (pp. 13-14). In contrast, the work of Peace Brigades International (PBI) in conflict zones does not elicit punitive responses from bellicose parties because of their commitment to “the principles of non-partisanship and non-interference in the internal affairs of the organisations [they] accompany” (Peace Brigades International, 2014). PBI practices strict third-party accompaniment of human rights defenders and communities at risk for political violence without taking part in any of the work of the organizations they accompany. They maintain that their “objectivity increases [their] credibility with all parties to the conflict and gives [them] access to authorities nationally and internationally” (Peace Brigades International, 2014). CPT chooses instead to work cooperatively with the vulnerable communities and other human rights activists in an effort to give not only moral, but also physical, support to their efforts to transform oppressive systems. As Matthew P. Eddy (2014) comments, “It must be remembered that Israel, defying UN proposals enjoying near-universal support, has consistently banned official third-party international observers..., and this is the reason accompaniment organizations such as ISM, CPT, Operation Dove, and International Women’s Peace Service exist in the partisan form they do in the West Bank” (p. 447).

CPT’s choice of partisan work to strengthen the grassroots initiatives creates greater bonds and trust between CPTers and the local population at risk and offers CPT opportunities to mentor to and advocate on behalf of the weaker party in the conflict. However, this choice does come with a cost. Kern (2010) has expressed concern that CPT’s nonviolent direct action could potentially lead settlers to retaliate against Palestinians.

This was clearly the thinking in 1995 when, after more intense settler threats, the headmistress for the Qurtuba School asked CPT and Hebron Solidarity Committee to stop accompanying the school girls into the school (Kern, 2010, p. 33). Settlers are also more likely to respond violently toward CPTers than the Israeli soldiers or police. Israeli security forces have not ignored CPT, however. Coy argues that unlike PBI, “Christian Peacemakers have frequently been directly singled out and detained by police” (2012, p. 9). The Israeli authorities have also denied some CPTers entry into Israel (and by extension the West Bank) including Michael Good, Kurtis Unger, and Kathy Kerns in 2002; Wendy Lehman, Cliff Kindy, Robert Laiman in earlier years; and Jonathan Brenneman and two CPT reservists in 2013 (Kern, 2010, pp. 190-191; CPTNet 2014b).

However, there has already been evidence presented in this work that CPT’s presence and actions have offered some protection to the Palestinian population in specific cases. In the cases of villagers in and around At-Tuwani and the students and faculty of Hebron University, CPT has also empowered these Palestinians to pressure the Israeli authorities to substantially improve their situations. The organization continues to provide the world community with footage and accounts of human rights violations under the Occupation and nonviolent resistance in the face of these. As one Palestinian man expressed to CPT delegates in January 2011, “Prior to the internationals, brutality and oppression took place, so CPTers and other internationals are not the problem. Internationals are important not only for protection but also education of the outside world” (author’s CPT delegation experience, 2011). In addition, nonviolent Palestinians draw strength from their partnership with CPT. Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Corrigan Maguire writes, “[T]he presence of Christian Peacemaking Teams in the occupied territories is very important. I have visited members of CPT in Hebron and stayed in orphanages with them. I know how courageous they are, and how much Palestinian communities appreciate their work of peacemaking and friendship (2008).

### 3.3 Beyond Accompaniment: Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions

In February 2010, CPT formally endorsed the global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS) movement as part of their expression of solidarity with Palestinians and advocacy for the reduction of foreign support for the Occupation. Palestinian civil society initiated the BDS movement in order to pressure Israel into honoring human rights and complying with international law by: Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;<sup>8</sup> Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194 (Palestinian BDS National Committee, 2005).

Over 170 Palestinian NGOs endorsed the call for the BDS on July 9, 2005, “a year after the International Court of Justice’s historic advisory opinion on the illegality of Israel’s Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories” (Palestinian BDS National Committee, 2005). These NGOs, representing Palestinians under occupation, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Palestinian refugees, called upon people “all over the world to launch broad boycotts, implement divestment initiatives, and...demand sanctions against Israel, until Palestinian rights are recognized in full compliance with international law” (Palestinian BDS National Committee, 2005). “The intention of this movement was to increase the costs of maintaining the occupation for Israel by bringing about the consumer boycott of products and services produced by Israeli companies or companies invested in Israel and divestment from those companies” (Checa Hidalgo, 2015, p. 30). International and even Israeli NGOs such as Rabbis for Human Rights, Breaking the Silence, and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions have since lent their support to the movement. On August 10, 2010, the Palestine Team released an action alert urging CPT’s constituencies to participate in the BDS movement: “CPT-Palestine invites you to join us, Palestinians, and people from all over the world in boycotting Israeli goods and cultural events, divesting from all companies that profit from the occupation of Palestine, and pushing for international sanctions on Israel” (CPTNet, 2010).

CPTers use ongoing action alerts, public speaking opportunities, and workshops to continue to educate and encourage others to support the BDS and to provide suggestions for concrete action steps. Gerald Steinberg claims that the transnational advocacy network supporting the BDS aims to isolate and dismantle Israel “as an apartheid state” (2011, p. 41).

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<sup>8</sup>The Wall is a separation barrier constructed by Israel in the West Bank. Israel justifies the Wall, which was started during the Second *Intifada*, as a security barrier to protect against Palestinian terrorism. Many Palestinians consider it to be an apartheid wall which also allows Israel to annex Palestinian land under the guise of security.

In an interview on National Public Radio (NPR), Steinberg (Tipping Point. [National Public Radio],2014) made the assertion that the BDS movement is an industry creating Palestinian victimization and denying the Jewish right to self-determination. Steinberg's criticism of the BDS and those NGOs in support of it, including CPT, find company among many Israelis and Jewish Americans, among others. Even some of those who oppose the Occupation do not agree with the BDS strategy as it does not clearly affirm Israel's right to exist and it targets all of Israel and not just companies and individuals contributing to the expansion of settlements. Peter Beinart points out that the BDS movement's demand for full equality can be interpreted as denying any Jewish public character to the state of Israel and the right of return for Jews in distress (Steinberg, 2011).

CPT has aligned itself with an NGO network drawing criticism from a growing number of Jews and supporters of Israel. The Israeli government and public could perceive CPT's endorsement of the BDS as a direct threat to Israel. Gerald Steinberg (2011) portrays CPT and others supporting the BDS as anti-Israeli. These perceptions may form even more with the recent acceleration of the BDS movement. Scandinavian, Dutch, and German banks, pension funds, and companies have begun divesting from Israeli banks and companies (Tipping Point. [National Public Radio], 2014). Turkey and Norway have suspended military relations with Israel, and the European Parliament has recommended imposing a boycott on Israeli products produced within the settlements in the Occupied Territories (Checa Hidalgo, 2015, p. 30). The Presbyterian Church (USA) also voted to divest \$21 million from occupation-linked multinational corporations. The American Jewish Committee, for example, called the Presbyterian Church's divestment "a set-back for Israeli-Palestinian peace and a breach with [the] Jewish community" (Weiss and Kane, 2014). Even though CPT professes to support the BDS in response to Israel's repressive policies, the organization's support for the movement draws valid criticism for its censoring of one of the parties to the conflict while publically limiting criticism of Palestinians.

## 1. Conclusion

After more than 20 years in Hebron, CPT has become firmly entrenched in the Palestinian community. CPTers provide accompaniment on a daily basis, especially for school children, and have developed multiple accompaniment strategies to meet the needs of the communities they serve. CPTers' time and attention have shifted to include other forms of nonviolent direct action including civil disobedience, nonviolent resistance, advocacy, and now some BDS work as they follow the lead of their local partners. CPT has created a niche within the nonviolence movement in Palestine for itself and has served as a model for other newer nonviolence organizations.<sup>9</sup> CPT's presence in the heart of the conflict zone in H2 has fostered a great deal of trust from the Palestinian community in and around Hebron. CPTers' willingness to sacrifice their comfort and put their lives on the line for the people they accompany has earned them acceptance and the confidence of the local population. For almost two decades, CPTers have accompanied Palestinian school children to and from school. Their accompaniment work in this area has undoubtedly resulted in safer passages for many of the children. Their work has enabled Palestinian children to continue an education over the years with less fear and fewer interruptions. There is also ample evidence that the presence of internationals including CPT's long-term team in At-Tuwani created a space for the farmers and shepherds to continue working on their land and maintaining their homes in the face of settlers' threats. Palestinians in Hebron and the South Hebron Hills have given testimonials of the direct impact CPT has had in their lives. CPT's accompaniment, which has created a long-term quality of life and "normalcy" enabling Palestinians to remain in their communities, has provided the most successful outcome from its work in Israel/Palestine.

A shortage of personnel, however, has forced the Palestine Team to sacrifice some accompaniment opportunities. Whereas there might be other NGOs in place to continue this service, as is the case in At-Tuwani, breakdowns in accompaniment can and do put Palestinians at risk. The team either needs to reduce its workload with less attention to some of the other public witness strategies or increase the number of CPTers on site. With that in mind, the teams should remain relatively small – up to eight people per site. Laura Ciaghi, (2014) contends that a light but stable international presence can sufficiently provide enough protection to create a space in which the local society can develop its own nonviolent initiatives and leadership to resist oppression.

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<sup>9</sup>For a detailed examination of the role CPT has played in the development of ICAHD, EAPPI, and ISM, see the author's dissertation work.

She cautions that large teams on the ground could impede the growth of local civil society, creating undue dependency on the international group and a new relationship akin to colonialism (pp. 12-14). One solution that CPT has recently implemented to address the challenges of staffing and impact of Western presence is to incorporate Palestinians, including Palestinian Muslim associate members, onto the Palestine Team.

Beyond accompaniment, CPT has employed tactics involving civil disobedience, nonviolent resistance, and advocacy as key components of the organization's public witness. These have fostered a great sense of solidarity with Palestinians. Active solidarity with the Palestinians enables CPTers to build trust and transmit nonviolence skills (through both modeling and training) more easily to the oppressed population. CPT's accompaniment and solidarity work supports the development and empowerment of its local partners. However, CPT's civil disobedience and lack of neutrality has antagonized Israeli settlers, soldiers, and government authorities in some cases making it more difficult to create a bridge between the adversaries. Organizations such as Peace Brigades International and Amnesty International, which do not engage in civil disobedience or nonviolent resistance, are in better positions to reach out to the mainstream populations and actors on both sides of a conflict. CPT may also hamper peace-building efforts by consistently focusing on Israeli causes for Palestinian suffering without openly scrutinizing Palestinians' culpability.

In recent years, CPT has deepened its solidarity with the Palestinian cause by endorsing the global BDS movement. CPT's participation in the BDS movement – its promotion of an anti-Israeli boycott and divestment campaign among its individual and church supporters - has tremendous potential for creating greater hostility to the organization. Working on behalf of Palestinians can potentially estrange even some of the more moderate members of the Jewish community and their supporters. The Israeli authorities as well as Israeli citizens and Jewish Americans may find CPT's broader and more aggressive action more threatening and even liken it (mistakenly) to anti-Semitism. In 2013 alone, for example, the Israeli authorities refused to allow three CPTers into Israel, although no one has claimed that this was a direct result of CPT's support for the BDS. It is telling, however, that Israeli authorities now regularly question incoming international visitors about their support of the BDS at airport security checks. Although this antagonism is a clear cost of this form of cooperation with Palestinians under occupation, CPT's commitment to following the lead of its local partners almost necessitated its endorsement of the BDS.

CPT has chosen a particular set of third-party nonviolent intervention strategies that might not all serve other organizations, including the UN, wishing to pursue international accompaniment in a more impartial way. Lessons from CPT's experience can inform other interested activists in diverse ways depending on the mission and goals of each organization. Certainly, Eddy (2014) is correct in his assertion that there is room for organizations filling "different niches in different contexts rather than pushing all to adopt [a] nonpartisan model" (p. 447). CPT has chosen solidarity instead of neutrality, however, as a principled, faith-based decision. CPT is bound to its faith-based values, which hold that it must follow in the tradition of Jesus, who came to set free the oppressed and "witnessed publically in a prophetic critique of the social, political, religious and economic structures of his time" (CPT, 2010c). CPT cannot choose neutrality with such an overwhelming imbalance of power in place. CPT attempts to understand and promote the needs of the marginalized Palestinian community where their voice is drowned out and empower them to work toward nonviolent, locally-inspired solutions to the violence and oppression they face. CPTers reject disinterested impartiality even in the face of criticism in order to work toward justice for the downtrodden. As the al Rajabi Building project demonstrates, their actions are not always successful, but in the words uttered by many CPTers, "We are not called upon to be successful, but rather to be faithful."

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