

Audio37J15 - Tent of Nations - Daoud Nassar

June 2012

Arnie Voigt, a Lutheran pastor, introducing:

. . . the oldest brother (Daher), he does the farming here. The youngest brother, he does the tourism bit. I forgot to mention, Tony is the middle brother and he is the vice principal of the Lutheran school of the middle school/high school in Bethlehem. And so, these are good folks and they've been hanging on to their land. The thing I remember about Daher saying last time is that the settlers offered him basically a blank check for this land and he said "I don't sell my mother." That's the kind of person he has, this is his land, it's been in the family since 1922 and Daher is not going to let it go.

Daher: I will stay here, on my farm, all my life. Ok, welcome!

Arnie: This is Daoud Nassar, one of the three brothers on the farm and these [our group] are all connected with Sabeel and we are from all over the United States from Kansas City, from Iowa, from Portland, from Seattle, from Philadelphia, from Virginia, from San Francisco, from Houston, and from Iowa again, . . .

Daoud:

So welcome to the Tent of Nations. Thank you so much for taking your time to visit us here. Um, my name is Daoud, Daoud is David. I was born in Bethlehem, finished my school in 1989 it was during the first Intifada. I, of course Friends of Sabeel, you know a lot about the situation. But during the Intifada time the universities were closed because the Israelis said at that time schools, universities, were places where young people come together. So they closed the schools and we lost a generation of young people who did not do anything except some of them were throwing stones on Israeli military cars.

Now I learned in Austria and I visited a Bible school there and then I came back in 1991, the university was opened and I was studying business and I have a BA degree in business and I continued my studies with tourism in Germany. Tourism is something important for the Holy Land cause this country is being visited by in general maybe 1.5 million tourists coming every year to the Holy Land. But most of them are Christian groups coming to visit and they're supposed to walk where Jesus walked but they end up running where Jesus walked because there is no time, always in a rush, rush and rush. So . . . is it true? No generally speaking, yeah? And that's, especially for the people coming to visit the Palestinian areas.

Imagine that in Bethlehem there about 7,000 guests coming daily to see the Church of Nativity. So the bus stops near the square and then the guide is taking the group into the church, there is no space there, so he says something and then that's it, take some pictures, and then they go home or they go back to Jerusalem without knowing that much about the situation, in general. And without knowing that among the Palestinians there are also Christians. Because many people they don't know that. I was studying in Austria and in Germany, many people, they kept asking, I was talking in churches, "when did you convert?" And the answer is 2,000 years ago. So we exported Christianity from here. Many people they mix religion with politics and they think all Arabs are Muslims, and not only Muslims, radical Muslims which is not the reality here because we have people here, Christians and Muslims, going to school together. My children, I have three children, and they are at the Lutheran school where you have more than 75% of the students are Muslims. So children are growing up together.

Now, the other thing is that it's important for every group to come and meet the "living stones" of the country and to get in touch, to learn about the country, to see the historical places, the religious places, etc but in the end also to meet the people. And when I'm talking about the people, I am talking about Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

I'm married now, I have three children, and my wife's doing also a women's project in the village, I will be talking about it later.

But, our situation here is totally connected to the political situation and I'm sure you are totally aware of the political situation. After the peace agreements, the Israelis divided the West Bank into three zones, the Areas A, B, and C. Where we are now, it is Area C which is totally under Israeli control. Area C is taking more than 65% of the West Bank. When we talk as Palestinians, when we talk about a state, where are we going to establish a state? We are not in charge of land. We are not in charge of resources. And we are not in charge of borders. And those are the three basic things to achieve a state. So we are in charge of people. And that's why, on what is called Area C Israelis are trying to create facts on the ground in terms of building settlements. And now we, just to give you some figures here, when we talk about Area C which is about 70% of the West Bank there are about 150,000 Palestinians living on Area C, only from 1.5 million in the West Bank. On the same area, there are about 400/350,000 Israeli settlers. Now with time, the number of Israeli settlers will be more and the number of the Palestinian will be less and less and then we'll be totally isolated, as Palestinians, in the homelands, we are talking about the cities, the Area A's. At the end, this is not a state we are talking about. So this is a homeland.

Now, back to our story, our family story, this piece of land was bought by my grandfather in 1916 during the Ottoman period. Two crazy things my grandfather did. The first one, he registered the land. and it was not the case with many Palestinians at that time because the Ottomans wanted to get property taxes and they demanded that any Palestinian should register his land in order to pay taxes and many Palestinians didn't do it because they said "why do we have to pay taxes to our occupiers? One day they will leave!" Which is true. At the end the Ottomans said also, for the land that was not registered, if you leave your land not cultivated continuously for more than three years, the state has the right to declare it as state land. Now the British, after the Ottomans left, the British and then the Jordanians started to do the same. But with the Israeli occupation in 1967 they stopped Palestinians from registering their own land. Now beginning in the '70s they started to build settlements and the easiest way to take land for the expansion of the settlements is to declare a piece of land as state land leaving the burden on the Palestinians to prove ownership. Now many of the Palestinians, they do not have their title on paper and they don't have land registration. So they could argue with this, which is also true, we are living here since generations! And I owned this land from my father and he got it from his grandfather and so on. And they said, ok, but, according to the Ottoman law you were not using the land for more than three years and according to that law, this is state land.

Q: But they weren't using it because they were kicked off the land?

Yes, I mean, they are not using it because of many reasons. One reason is that they don't allow you to cultivate. I will tell you personal stories here, you know? Also, agriculture is not a source of income for the people so you invest and you don't have anything back. The next generation said, there is no need, there is no purpose to cultivate the land, to plant trees and in the end you have no income. And also, the other stuff is in other areas you need machinery, machines like big diggers and tractors and so

on and they don't allow us to use those machines in order to keep the land not cultivated. The moment the land is not cultivated, they can declare it as state land saying that the land has no owner. So they prevent you from cultivation and then they say it's not cultivated because it has no owner.

Q: But it's not their land in the beginning?

Of course, it is an occupation. This is the problem we are actually facing as Palestinians here and those laws they are unjust laws for us Palestinians they are just laws for them to take land and to control the area and expand the settlements.

Now, back to the story. The second thing (I was talking about the first thing) is the land registration. The second thing my grandfather did, he moved from Bethlehem and he used to live in a cave on the property and it was unusual. That's why now many Palestinians are not living in general on their farms. They are farming the land but going back to their communities in the villages or in the cities. So my grandfather wanted to do totally different because he wanted his children to grow up here and this is exactly what happened. So after my grandparents passed away, my father and my uncle took over, they continued farming the land, cultivating the land, etc. until they passed away. So they lived all of their lives in caves on the property. Now we as children and as grandchildren we also grew up that way, keeping the same tradition from my grand family and from my grandfather and uncle and we continued on and on. And in 1991 we heard by chance that the Israelis declared the whole area including our land as state land. So they give us 45 days to prove ownership. Actually what they do is they just put the paper somewhere. Sometimes you don't find it. We found it by chance through a guy walking, crossing to the village, and he said, well we saw some people putting papers here and there.

And we went to Bethlehem to ask what's going on, Bethlehem was under the Israeli control at that time, there was an office called "The Absentee property office." Absentee Property Office. So we asked, they said, "Well, your land is state land because it has no owner." And we were given as I said 45 days, from those 45 days we lost 15 days. And we had to react in those days and to appeal to the military court and immediately we arranged, we organized ourselves and we hired a lawyer that did this paperwork and we presented with the first session, our lawyer presented the papers from our title. And the Israeli military judge was shocked to see papers, they were not expecting us to have documents for the land. Immediately the case was postponed because there was no case to talk about. You say it was state land, normally, usually, you know, case closed but for them, you know, it's still opened since 1991. We are in court since 1991, 12 years of legal battle in front of the military court and now over 8 years in front of the Supreme Court, the high court, with a financial burden of \$150,000 until now.

Now what they are trying to do, they say something and we have to prove the opposite. For example, they said this is state land now the burden is on **us** to prove it's private land. Then they said, ok, if you want to prove that, you need to survey the land again. Now we have an old map for the land, all land surveys go back to 1922. They said, well it was done by hand so we need a new one. So making a new one, we had to pay \$5,000 and in order for a land survey to be recognized by the court, it should be signed by all neighbors and we were given 35 days to do it. So we had to run to our neighbors, Palestinian neighbors and to encourage them to sign onto our map. And some of them were suspicious, "why do you need our signature? Everybody knows this is your land." We managed to do it, we present it, and then they said ok, we need to study it and the case was postponed. And then they said, now, we need eyewitnesses, we need people who lived here, farmed the land, planting trees and we brought 50 people, a big bus to the military court and we were standing five hours under the sun and

then a soldier came out and said "we have no time to talk to you today, come tomorrow." So always like obstacles. So later on they said, "your land surveyors, they are not recognized in Israel." So we had to hire an Israeli land surveyor, he had to go to Istanbul, he had to go to England to check old papers, new papers, maps whatever you know and writing a report, we had to pay him around \$70,000. So we had to survey the land until now maybe eleven times. And always the same survey, you know, because our borders are accurate, we know all of our borders. But still they are making difficulties on us in order for us to voluntarily give up.

Q: or run out of money

Right. Now this is legally, but it didn't work so far, we are still here, we did not lose any part of the land. Now they try the second way which is to put more physical pressure on us through the settlers. So between 1991 and 2002, Israeli settlers came attacking us. Threatening us with guns, damaging our trees and our water tank, trying to build three times a road on our property in order to establish a settlement which is the last Palestinian and Christian hill here, surrounded by six Israeli settlements. And the idea is to build a settlement here not only to control the hill, but also to control the Palestinian village from all sides, to be isolated and then people, with the time, they have no, any source of income, they are disconnected from their communities, from their work in Bethlehem, so they will voluntarily leave the area.

So, the last time they came in 2002 with big machines, they started cutting the ground in order to build a road. We managed to stop them three days later by court. And the settlers were very angry and they smashed 250 olive trees on our property and of course you know what is the meaning of an olive tree for a Palestinian. We were very frustrated and we went to the police, the Israeli police, to claim damage but nothing happened on their side. So three weeks later we received an email from a Jewish organization located in England called "European Jews for a Just Peace in Palestine," they heard about us and they sponsored this place with 250 olive trees and they came and planted them. So this was, for us, a very positive sign of hope. Now with physical pressure, we have many stories to tell but we are still here, as you see we did not give up. Then they tried to buy the land from us. And one time in 2002 we got an offer, a phone call says "would you like to sell the land?" And the offer was a blank check. Just write down how many millions of US dollar you want for this area and then a free access, where do you want to go? To the United States, to Canada, to Australia, we will help you.

Q: So someone from the government?

We don't know, just someone, I said "who is that? just give us names." [They] said, first if you are interested to do it then we can talk later. And we said as an answer "Our land is our mother and our mother is not for sale."

Now they are using the fourth strategy which is to isolate us. The road is blocked since 2001 and the wall is being built on Palestinian ground, you passed by the wall. And of course, when the wall is finished, totally finished, this area will be outside the wall which will be on the Israeli side of the wall and this will prevent 25,000 Palestinians living in five villages to cross back and forth to Bethlehem easily. Imagine many people especially from this village called Nahalin (sp) there are 200 teachers teaching everyday at school in Bethlehem and they have to be [at school] at seven o'clock, around seven o'clock at school. And there will be an access road for us which is like a small tunnel under the road 60, the settler's road, and this tunnel will be totally under Israeli control. This means that the trip

to Bethlehem, the drive, a half an hour, it will take maybe five hours on some days. And this will force many people to leave the villages and go to the cities in order to make it easy for them to cross to their work. In other words, most of the Palestinian population will be in Area A, what is called Area A which are the cities. And of course this is the future of the Palestinians, to live isolated from each other in just the cities. And the city, I mean if you are coming from Bethlehem, it's like overcrowded in Bethlehem it's becoming now impossible to live there, actually, you know. Two roads, so many cars, its hard, the air is not good, like diesel and benzene and whatever. So at the end, this is the future of the Palestinians according to the plan.

So now, the restrictions continue here. We are not allowed to build anything on our land here. We have no access to running water and no access to electricity. That means no development. And two years ago we received here nine demolishing orders for nine structures we built here without a permit. Among them are four tents and when the Israeli officer came to give us the demolishing orders, I was pointing to him, I said first, "Is this law for Palestinians only or for both Israelis and Palestinians?" He could not say for Palestinians only, he said for everyone, you build something without a permit that's why you receive the demolishing order. I said, "I accept it and understand it. Now if we are equal, both under the law, I'm expecting you to go to my neighbors," and I was pointing to him a settlement, an illegal settlement, there are illegal outposts built after 2002 on private Palestinian lands and the houses are built there without a permit. I said, "Ok I received a demolishing order for my tents but now my neighbors should receive demolishing orders for their houses. " He said, "this is not your business." So discussion ends.

So we challenged, we appealed against the demolishing order, many people help us a lot internationally, they send letters, from the U.S. from Germany from other countries and because of this pressure we managed to freeze the demolishing orders.

Now three months ago in the middle of February, we received another three re-cultivation stop orders. Actually we did not receive them by hand, we found them on the field. One is on a tree, another one on a wall and the third one, we found it on a fence. And we were given 45 days, we were given it a day before we had a storm here, it was windy and rainy and maybe many of our laborers they did not find the papers. So we were lucky, we found the papers. We appealed, we appealed against them and just recently on the 21st of May we found a paper in the valley a demolishing order for a cistern so the journey continues. So we have now four legal battles in parallel to each other: the one from 1991, the second one the demolishing orders two years ago, the third one the cultivation stop orders a couple of months ago and the fourth one is the demolishing order for the cistern.

So it's a big frustration for us and by the way this is not a unique story. You hear it everywhere. Of course it could be a unique story because it is the only story that still is in court since 1991. What is happening here is happening everywhere in the West Bank. And this situation is forcing Palestinians whether to react in a violent way or whether just to sit down and cry and blame the other and be a victim, resign. Or leave. Those are the three options we are facing. So, there are people who believe in violence, but what can we achieve with violence except violence? The majority of the Palestinians, they are sitting down, being passive, waiting for a political Messiah to come for salvation. And the third group, among them are the best educated Palestinians and also Christians, they are leaving the country, they don't see any hope for a better future. For us, we said from the beginning, we will never act in a violent way, we will never sit down and cry and blame the other, we refuse to be victims, and we said also we will never leave the area. We said we are people who believe in justice, they cannot

force us to hate, and because we believe that people are created in the image of God and they're not created to hate each other and we will never leave the area. So we created a fourth way of action, a creative way of non-violent resistance under the slogan "We refuse to be enemies." It is easy to say that but it is very difficult to live it on the ground. And of course it's a non-violent way of action, overcoming the obstacles with good, overcoming evil with good, overcoming hate with love, overcoming darkness with light. And this is by the way the Christian non-violent way of resistance.

So under that slogan we created the "Tent of Nations." The idea of the Tent of Nations is to achieve two goals: the first one is to invest our frustration constructively because our frustration is an energy, it might come out in a negative way and it might hurt people but you want to channel this pain to be a constructive power. And the second goal is to open the land for people to come and learn, to come and see and not only to come and see but also to go and tell. Because we need the people to understand and to come together and build bridges of understanding of reconciliation and peace, including Israeli people. We are inviting Israeli people, American Jewish, not to talk about peace. Because it's impossible, how can you speak about peace when you are living under occupation. Something is missing here. Sometimes you feel you have groups of Palestinians and Israelis coming together and talking about peace. I mean with all respect but this is . . . because at the end, at the end of the talk, people are going back their realities again. And that is why something is missing, we are not equal, we are not sitting around the same table and talking about a nation. So that is why it is important for us to say that we cannot talk about peace in this situation but we are inviting people to open their eyes, to open their hearts because many Israelis, they say "we don't know" or they don't want to know. So come and see! Maybe you will hear a difficult story but it's important for you to listen and to understand. And when you talk about occupation, this is how life looks like under occupation and now, I'm not expecting that much from you but at least, you heard, you listened to our story and then if you would like to do anything you go to your community and then try to spread the word and talk about it OR close the page and say I don't want to deal with this issue but at least you had a chance to see the other as a human being and not as an enemy.

And now, the challenge was how to develop this place without water, without electricity and without a building permit. It looks impossible but nothing is impossible. So for water, we are totally depending on rain water, we are collecting rain water into cisterns. For energy we have a solar power system sponsored by a German organization in 2009 we managed to do it and by that we have 4.5 kilowatt of electricity, it's enough. And we have a wireless internet here, now. And by that we did not receive any bills from the sun [laughter] until now, you never know what might happen. But on the contrary we managed to save more than \$20,000 for diesel expenses since 2009 and we are talking about 3 hours of electricity every day using the generator. Now we are having 24 hours of electricity and without any costs. So, it's not about electricity, it's not about water and with building, we've started building under the ground, (we are not allowed to build on the ground) we decided under the ground renovating existing caves. But the idea is not about that, the idea is to show people including Palestinians that things are possible, don't sit down, don't cry, and don't blame the other. Stand up, raise your voice and start acting in a different way. Because when you act in a different way, you confuse the other and you force the other to see you as human being and this is important for us, you know? and this is our way of action here. So after we developed the infrastructure we are doing here different kinds of activities and programs, we are starting every year with a tree planting project. We invite people to sponsor trees, we invite people to plant trees, we invite Palestinians, Israelis, internationals to come and plant for peace. When you plant a tree, especially an olive tree, you believe in the future. Especially the first fruits might come after ten years, the first olives, so it's a big investment for the future. When you plant a

tree, you protect the environment, you make the land green, productive and you keep it from the danger of confiscation because they have a law taken from the Ottomans that if you leave your land not cultivated and planted they will take it. So doing that always will make it difficult for land to be confiscated. And also we learn that peace should grow from the bottom up, peace cannot come from up to down, we need the ground, the ground is missing. That's why we are talking about peace but we are not making peace and exactly this is what Jesus said, blessed who are the peace MAKERS and he did not say the peace talkers. Because it's easy to talk about something, very easy, but it is very difficult to realize it and that's why, you know, you have all these people talking about peace, from up to down they are negotiating and talking about this or that and at the end you don't see any fruits of peace. But we need to cultivate the ground. You know as a farmer, you need to cultivate the ground a couple of times, prepare it for the winter and then plant the seeds or trees and some of them might grow and some of them might not grow, it is not an easy work. But at the end if you give the tree enough water, enough care the tree will find its roots, the roots will find their way to the ground and then they can live for generations, especially the olive tree. And that is why it is important to do enough from the bottom up.

Now the second program we are doing is the children's summer camp activities, we are doing two weeks of summer camp for local children from Bethlehem area both Christians and Muslims from refugee camps and we invite the children for two weeks and do this kind of work like painting, mosaic, music. We want the children to discover their ties and we have always a theme for our camp so the next summer camp will be before Ramadan which will start on the 20th I think and we have Muslim kids so we started early this year so it's going to be on the 9th of July for two weeks and the theme is "With heart and hand, you change the land." So this is our title for the camp and under this slogan, this title we do different kinds of activities with the help of twelve international volunteers to help with the summer camp. At the end of the camp we invite the parents for a celebration to see what the children have done during the summer camp and also to reach the parents, to motivate them. Because we need our people to get motivated.

Now the third project we are doing is a women's project in the village, my wife is a computer teacher and she started these computer classes and English classes for women who do not have chances for education in the village. And the idea is not only about education, but also about women empowerment because we need the women to play a role in shaping their society here. And we added now agricultural training and other workshops, we have also first aid classes. And on the 27th of June we have a video conference or a Skype call with a group of women in London in the UK. So we are trying to overcome our obstacles with internet and to get our voices to other people. This is important for the women to get in touch with other women, learning about their society not only to speak about our problems. Because you as internationals are coming to learn about our situation and sometimes you help us indirectly to fall in the victim's circle because you are expecting us to tell you more about how bad life is for us. At the end you learn, you go back home and of course you do a lot in your communities but then you leave us in our frustration. That's why it is important for us to speak about our frustration but to say this is not the end because we need to break the chains and move out of our circle and start acting in a different way.

So we have other projects going on, the harvest camps, we have the almond harvest next month, we are now in the apricot harvest and almond harvest in July, we have grape harvest in August, the fig harvest in September and the olive harvest the end of October. We have people coming to stay in our tents, they can walk the land in the morning, do field trips in the afternoon and sit together by the fire in the

evening for an exchange. We have volunteers coming to us for short and long term. We have long term volunteers coming between six months and one year especially from Germany. Other volunteers are coming between one day and three months. So last year we had more than 5,000 who came to visit here, international presence is very important here, it helps us a lot. And that's why we ask people to come even if they don't have enough time or much time. The moment you walk in here from the roadblock it's important for people to come see and learn but also it's a sign of hope for us. In terms of the legal battle they are always asking us from where you have internationals on your property so this is a good sign for us it helps us a lot.

Now our situation is going to be worse. Of course we hope for the best but we have to be prepared for the worst. So if they close the wall totally this area will be on the Israeli side of the wall and that's why it is urgent for us to make this place totally self sufficient. So we invested in energy and we hope by the end of the year to install two small wind turbines and we are filtering now the grey water and using it for irrigation. An Israeli friend was a settler before, he came here and this visit it changed his life and he came back and he built four compost toilets for us here so in order to save more water. And we are trying to increase the land production so to make this place totally self sufficient.

And yeah, the big dream is one day to have a vocational training center here focusing on alternative energy and organic farming. I believe in small steps, we do whatever we can within our capacities but all those small steps together will definitely change the face of the situation. We have a web site you can learn more about our work the work we are doing on the web site, tentofnations.org and we started also with Friends of Tent of Nations North America, they are trying to bring me twice a year on speaking tours in the United States to spread some of the good news. So faith, love, and hope are the basics of our work here. And please don't forget that out of Palestine there are still some good news.

So, I stop here, if you have some questions, please.

Q: I don't want to detract from the wonderfully positive endnote but I was wondering if you could tell us about the roadblock here and how it happened and why it hasn't been taken down.

Yeah, I mean they came, the settlers, they always like call the army and they tell, for security purposes you need to close the road and so they come with bulldozers and they close the road and because they say it is always for security purposes we cannot do that much against it. So we cannot appeal and say well we need you to open the road so it's for security purposes.

Q: So they will just fabricate a story about how . . .

There was no story to fabricate because even in the worst years of the Intifada nothing happened here, no attacks, no settler was attacked by a Palestinian and killed or something, nothing. But the idea is like they don't want Palestinians to use that road, especially the farmers. When you have the road blocked and you need machines, you need a tractor to go through and cultivate the land, many of the Palestinians, they give up. They say "I cannot reach my land." And they leave it abandoned a couple of years and then of course with aerial photographs they can prove this was not cultivated, this land was not cultivated for five or six years and then they come and take it. But security purposes is actually you have so many things under it.

Q: Right, it seems like the military is just doing the dirty work of the government land planners.

Actually sometimes I say the settlers, they govern here. They are in charge of everything. I mean, of course sometimes not directly but sometimes through the army. They call and say "they are doing this and that" and so the army comes. But it's good sometimes to challenge even the soldiers with those kinds of things. One time I was parking the car at the roadblock and then the soldiers came and they were very angry and they were calling with the loudspeaker. And then I was running to the car because sometimes they can just open or you know just like blow it up. They say maybe there is a bomb inside it or something. So I went to the car and the soldier was very angry, he approached me and he said "Why you park your car here!" he was screaming at me. I said because you are blocking the road. You know, he did not expect me to answer this question, to answer that way. And there was a moment of silence. And then, I was in charge. At the beginning he wanted to make me feel very afraid and so on but after this answer I was asking him questions. I said to him, "why are you closing this road?" He said "because of security purposes." And then, it was in the afternoon, so some workers were coming down from the settlements because Palestinian workers are building settlements. This is also a sad story. But they were walking down and I said "Look! The Palestinians are working inside settlements and you say for security purposes they are closing the road but the Palestinians are walking out from the settlements going home, what's going on?" He said, "Oh, I don't understand it either!" So sometimes when you challenge those people they start to realize that something is wrong here. Sometimes it's good to deliver a message. To show the other that in front of you is not an enemy, is also a human being. Remind the enemy that you are not an enemy. . . .

Q: I'm interested in the notices you find in the field or on a tree. Do you get mail service anywhere in your name in the name that this land is registered in? Because it seems that something as official as this kind of notice they would need to be sure that you got it. That would be their responsibility. Like my tax office, if it's very important I get registered mail, they want me to sign, yes you got it, your taxes are going to be more.

But here, you know, you don't, sometimes they come, people working with the civil administration, and they come and they ask them to deliver papers. And they don't come to the owners and say "This is a paper, you did something wrong" or you know "this is state land." Sometimes they just put it there and take a picture "We delivered it on the area." I saw them, usually they have two people, one is putting this paper on a wall or something and the other, the other is taking a picture "we delivered this" and he's talking also, so it's like a video to be sure it's done.

Q: But a rock or a tree isn't a person.

[laughter] Yeah, this is the idea in order for the Palestinians not to find it. And then, of course the Palestinians are given 45 days to act but most of them they might find it later on. Because according to our tradition, people are not coming everyday to their farms. So when you drive in a bus and you see like cultivated lands and trees and so on, not everyday are the farmers going there. So they are going there occasionally, preparing the land for the rain, cultivation and then grooming the trees and then later on with the harvest and then to prepare the land for the rain again. So, four or five times a year you have people regularly on the farm and that's why they won't be able to find those papers. So the moment the time is running out and you as a Palestinian, you did not know about it so they come maybe five or six months later and then they start digging a road through your land and you want to go and stop them and then they will show you a paper that says "well we gave you a paper three months ago or five months ago and nobody reacted!" So now for the Western ears, this is understandable they

don't say we "left the paper somewhere" they say "we delivered the paper to you." And then you did not respond, that means you have no title for your land, you have no paper for the land and that's why you did not respond automatically you did not respond in the time we will give you and that's why the government has the right to take the land.

Q: I mean, it's not their land in the first place, even to make any judgement about period! It is occupied territory, it is illegal under international law even to consider giving it away.

That's true! That's it. It's occupied, of course, yes. But for Israelis they don't say it's occupied territory, they say it's "Judea and Samaria" and we are in charge of this area. They are not recognizing what is done on the West Bank as an occupation. So that's why they say, even for this military committee that is responsible for the West Bank they say the "civil administration" of Judea and Samaria, this is what it is called.

Q: So they don't say military occupation?

No, they don't say that it is the civil administration

Q: With soldiers

Q: I wanted to thank you for your presentation, for the finest representations of what it means to be a Christian that I would've hoped to hear from anyone anywhere. So it's a privilege to even be here (Thank you) and to hear your theology of this place so thank you. I wanted to ask, you said the cycle of victimhood was something you have to work to prevent because in telling the stories over and over you're also re-enforcing a self image of victim which is problematic which is part of what created this whole conflict to begin with. You think about the victimhood of Jewish people as well. Who inspired you? Where did you learn these concepts? I know it's taken a long time but are there particular writers or teachers or thinkers?

Well, you know, what we do here is actually based on faith, the first thing is based on faith. We, I grew up in a Christian family, my grandfather was a spiritual man, my father was an evangelist he was working on doing children's work, house meetings. So, we grew up that way and of course I'm inspired also by other people. But our way of action here actually did not come from today and after tomorrow, we went through this process since 1991 with difficulties and problems and so on. But the Tent of Nations we started actually in 2001. It is like a process of experiencing the situation and then thinking about actions that we might do in order to prevent this kind of thing. But it's not so easy, it's a process but I'm very happy to be with the Tent of Nations to see this situation now because I want to see the positives out of it. With this story, this difficult story, and I'm trying to write a book about our struggle to keep the land and I will mention the difficult stories that we experienced here. We managed, in the middle of suffering you can encourage other people. That's the faith in action. Because with our story we managed to inspire so many people, locally, internationally and even Israelis. With daily problems we are facing still we are bringing hope with this example to so many other people and this is actually what inspires me too.

Q: What's going on with, since we last saw you they issued this demolition order for the cistern?

Yes, this is recently, the 21st of May. For eight years this cistern has been built but the thing is they tell

you it is without a permit but the moment you apply for a permit they deny it. Without giving you a reason. So for example the tents, they said to us it's without a permit. Then we apply, three times we applied and each time we had to pay like \$1,500, it's always like, you know, to have a land surveyor and do this paperwork and so on. And at the end, 40 days later you receive a negative answer without any reason. So in any country you expect like for example if you want to do an extension to your house you apply for a permit, you do the paperwork and at the end you receive an answer: No, because or Yes, go on. But here we receive No without Why.

Q: What will happen if they don't postpone or you can't win with that?

They might come and demolish.

Q: And then what for you?

Of course we have to prevent that from happening but for me it's important not to stay in that situation so the moment I start to think tomorrow they might come. Of course we are under this pressure, we see them coming up the road . . .

[End of recording]