

Visit of the Irish Muslim Delegation to Gaza

The Delegation:

There were altogether 23 people in the group. These included representatives of the main Islamic organisations in Ireland and charities, doctors, students and others. The group left Dublin on 6th of February and returned on 13th February 2013.

Our Route to Gaza:

We flew from Ireland to Egypt and took a bus from Cairo airport to Gaza. Special permission had to be sought from the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enter Gaza through the Egyptian Rafah border crossing. Our journey would have been impossible during the pre-revolution Egypt.

The journey from Cairo to the Egyptian Rafah over the Suez Canal and across the Sinai desert took us around 6 hours.



As-Salam Bridge over the Suez Canal between Asia and Africa.

The Sinai desert:

Sinai is a triangular peninsula situated between the Mediterranean Sea to the north, and the Red Sea to the south, and is the only part of Egyptian territory located in Asia serving as a land bridge between Asia and Africa.



Through Sinai Desert

Sinai has a rich religious history with many prophets of Allah crossing it during their travel between Palestine and Egypt. These included Prophet Ibrahim, Yusuf, Yaqoub and Musa, peace be upon them all.



Sinai Desert

At Rafah Border Crossing:

Due to the Israeli land, sea and air siege of Gaza, the Rafah border crossing is the only link between the Gaza Strip and the outside world.



Rafah Land Port

Although we had already obtained permission to cross, we had to wait for four hours before being allowed to cross to the Palestinian side. In the past, the border used to be closed randomly for long times. People had to wait for weeks and months on one side of the border or the other. After the Egyptian revolution the president of Egypt ordered the border to be opened permanently. The situation is still not normal. Although passenger restrictions were loosened, the shipment into Gaza of goods remains blocked. There were many chaotic scenes at the border when we were there like the ones shown in the photos.



Egyptian Rafah Border

The Palestinian Rafah:

We were certainly very happy to cross the border to Gaza. Members of the group took this photo immediately after crossing the border waving the victory sign.



After crossing the border

Arrival in Palestine:



The welcoming sign of 'Ahlan in Palestine' at Palestinian Rafah



Warm welcome by the Palestinian officials



So grateful for arrival in Palestine that they fell down in prostration to Allah!



Gaza welcomes you



The Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip is a territory on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea that borders Egypt on the southwest and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory on the east and north. It is 41 kilometres long from Rafah in the south to Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun in the north, and from 6 to 12 kilometres wide, with a total area of 365 square kilometres.

There are three main cities in Gaza; Khan Younis in the South, Deir al-Balah in the middle and Gaza city. The population of Gaza is 1,700,000.



Commodore Hotel Gaza where we stayed



Gaza Sea Port. In the middle monument erected by the Turkish government for the Turkish martyrs of the Marmara boat



Fishermen boats at Gaza sea port



Inside Sheikh Ahmed Yassin House with his son Abdul-Ghani



Sheikh Ridwan graveyard in Gaza where many martyrs lie



A different feeling comes to you when you enter Sheikh Ridwan graveyard and walk among the graves. It is as if you are not walking among the dead

Near the Gaza-Occupied Territory border:

Before the last Israeli war against Gaza in November 2012, Palestinian in Gaza were prohibited by the Israelis from approaching the border with Israel or otherwise they risk losing their lives. A buffer zone was created which meant that Palestinian farmers were unable to cultivate their land which is adjacent to the border. Part of the deal which paved the way for the ceasefire between the Gaza government and Israel in November 2012 was that the farmers were to be allowed to cultivate their land without hindrance by Israel.



We visited these wheat and barley farms near the border with Israel cultivated by the Gazans for the first time in many years.





We approached the border until we could see the Israeli military vehicles on patrol behind the Israeli observation posts.



Palestinian women in their farms near the border



This Palestinian farmer showed us part of an Israeli rocket which fell in his farm during the last war in November 2012.

Delicious Palestinian Food:



Despite the economical situation and the siege, Palestinians are very generous. They look very well after their guests.



We liked the habit that no food is wasted. If any left, they will collect it and give to those who need it.

The Liberated (areas):

After the occupation of the Gaza Strip during the 1967 Arab-Israeli six-day war, the Israelis established 21 civilian settlements in the best agricultural land in the Strip. The protection of these settlements turned to be very costly for Israel because of the attacks by the Palestinian resistance in Gaza. By 2005 Israel dismantled all settlements in Gaza. These settlements are now called by the Gazans the liberated areas. We visited one of these areas where the Palestinian government in Gaza is planning to plant one million date palm trees.



Date palm trees plantation project in Gaza



Official of the Department of Agriculture in Gaza explaining the date palm project

Visiting some charities in Gaza Strip:

Due to the blockade against Gaza, many Gazans depend on the aid provided by relief organizations. Many local and international charities such as Human Appeal International, Interpal, Islamic Relief and others are active in Gaza. They provide vital assistance to the population.



Al-Aqsa Charitable Clinic in Bani Suhaila, Gaza.



With the Chairman of Al-Aqsa Charitable Society (in the middle.)



The will to exist within us is more lasting than the existence of the occupation in our land – a poster in the Al-Aqsa Charitable Clinic,

Human Appeal International (HAI):

Human Appeal International, which has an office in Ireland, is doing very good work in Gaza. This includes renovation of hospitals and schools, provision of medical supplies to hospital, agricultural and animal production projects, water desalination projects, orphans sponsorship and even rebuilding of bridges and schools destroyed by the Israelis.



In the Office of Human Appeal International with its Director in Gaza



Medical supplies for hospitals by Human Appeal International



Eye hospital renovation by HAI



Fresh (desalinated) water distribution for schools in Gaza by HAI



HAI Water desalination plant in Gaza city



Agricultural Production Project of HAI



HAI Animal Production Project



Final touches of repair work on destroyed bridge on Gaza Valley Coastal Road undertaken by HAI.

The water problem in the Gaza Strip:

One of the biggest problems facing the people of Gaza Strip is the water problem. The polluted water is causing serious kidney and other diseases for the population. Even vegetables and fruits are contaminated by the dirty water. According to reports the underground water system in the Strip is in danger of complete collapse due to over use and contamination. Salt water from the sea is seeping into the fresh water supplies, and in most of the Strip salt level is above the World Health Organisation's guidelines by 700%. The entire Gazan population depend on the underground water for drinking, bathing and agricultural use.

Five yeas of Israeli blockade have meant that essential building parts have not been allowed in the Strip so that water and sanitation facilities may be fixed, maintained or upgraded.

Israel recent wars on Gaza only made the situation worse destroying whatever little sewerage and water infrastructures that was in place.



Human Appeal Water Desalination Plant



Visit of Al-Daloo Family:

During the last Israeli war on Gaza from 14th to 21st November in which 158 people were killed and 1200 were injured, Israel committed one of the most heinous war crimes killing ten members of one family; the Al-Daloo family. The family house was struck by an air missile bringing it down upon those who were inside it. Ten members of the family were immediately killed including four children and five women.



The martyrs of Al-Daloo family: Mohamed Jamal Al-Daloo; his children Sarah, Yusuf, Jamal and Ibrahim; his wife; his mother; his aunt and his two sisters.

Only Mohamed's father; Jamal Al-Daloo, who was outside the house at the time of the strike escaped the massacre. We met the bereaved father and his son Abdullah in their new rented apartment. Abdullah was living in Turkey but now returned to Gaza to live with his father. It is not known why the Israelis targeted Mohamed Al-Daloo eliminating him and nine of his family!



The house of Al-Daloo family razed to the ground by an Israeli missile attack.



Abdullah Al-Daloo with members of the delegation



Gazan school children taking a short cut to their school through the rubble of the war-destroyed houses

Al-Shifa Hospital:

Al-Shifa Hospital is the largest medical complex in Gaza Strip including internal medicine, general surgery, paediatrics, ophthalmology, and obstetrics and gynaecology departments. Much of the media coverage of the Israel-Gaza wars was broadcast or written by correspondents reporting from the hospital.





At Gaza Al-Shifa Hospital



New construction work - Al-Shifa Hospital

Destruction ... destruction ... destruction:

During the last Israeli war on Gaza much of the infrastructures in Gaza were destroyed by the Israeli air strikes.



The destroyed Council of Ministers building



Flags of Malaysia, Bahrain and other delegations which visited Gaza on the destroyed Council of Ministers building.



Gaza Strip – Governmental Departments Complex- reads the sign



The destroyed government complex



What was once 'Palestine Stadium.'



You wonder; why sport stadium? Perhaps to cause more misery and make life impossible.



Nothing is safe; not even sport ground for the disabled



Has the missile hit its strategic target?



The National Islamic Bank!



This bridge on Gaza valley was destroyed by Israel.; now being repaired.

Self-defence or self-destruction:

The above were only a few examples of the destruction caused by Israel in Gaza. You need not to be an apostle to prophesize that this aggression would not go without reckoning. Some might try to defend the indefensible and call it right to self-defense. Would this lead to self-defense or self-destruction?

Down town Gaza- Life goes on:



Busy street in Gaza



People patiently go about their lives





Islamic slogans in Gaza streets are very common. The spirit is different than in any other city!



The photos of the martyrs in the streets –Al-Dahdouh Family Martyrs Square



Martyrs of Tal (Hill) Al-Mujahideen Area

Al-Quds is always present:

When we used to say to the Gazans that we were very happy to be in Gaza, they respond by saying: "Insha' next time we all be in Al-Quds."



With the Minister for Awqaf and Islamic Affairs



The Minister for Awqaf and Islamic Affairs presented the gift of 'the Covenant of Al-Quds' to us.



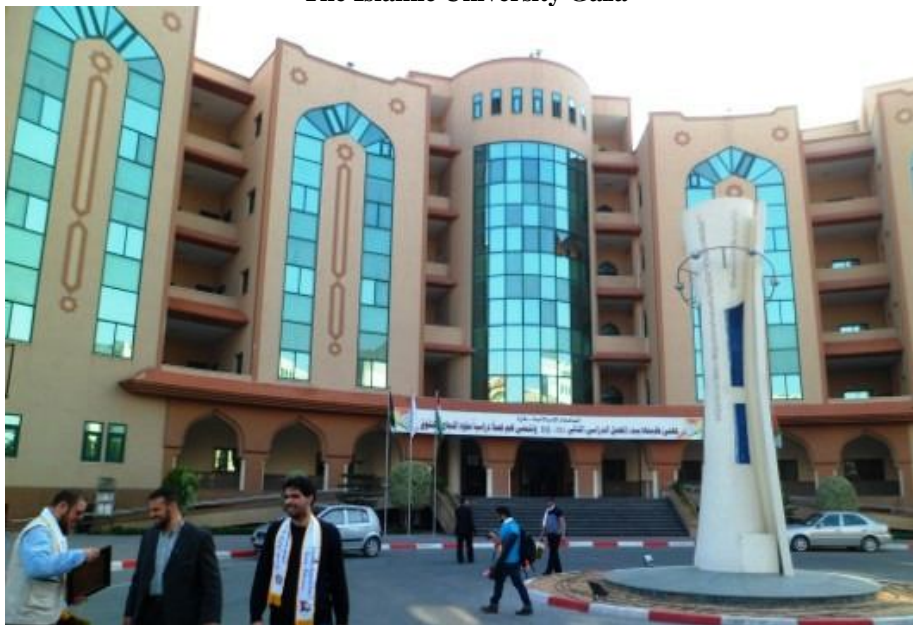
Al-Quds Covenant

We, members of the Muslim *Ummah* world-wide and children of the Palestinian nation who are firmly holding to our positions in Bait Al-Maqdis and its surroundings – based on our belief in the sanctity of Al-Quds city and our religious and historical right in every atom of its soil we make this covenant and pledge to protect the Arabic and Islamic identity of Al-Quds and that Al-Quds remains to be part of our belief, history and civilisation ... and to remain faithful to Al-Aqsa and our sanctuaries ... and that Al-Quds will be present in our hearts and minds

The Islamic University - Gaza



The Islamic University Gaza



Irada (Will) Project:

This project was established in the Islamic University - Gaza for the rehabilitation and vocational education of the war-injured and the disabled in Gaza. It is sponsored by the Turkish government. We saw many wonderful arts and crafts and furniture products manufactured by the students for the local and outside market.



The Director of the Irada project explaining to us.



Book binding



Crafts



Gift boxes



Peace on Earth



Arts and crafts by Irada students





Furniture by Irada students



With the relatives of the Palestinian prisoners:

Monday was our last day in Gaza. It is also the day on which the relatives of the Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli jails gather for their weekly protest in front of the headquarters of the Red Cross in Gaza to remember their loved ones and to demand their release. We joined in the protest and listened to the speeches. There are 4489 Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli jails.



A newly freed prisoner addressing the gathering



Ahmed Daloul, representative of the Foreign Ministry and our guide in Gaza



Good bye Gaza!



Back in Cairo