
CPT HEBRON: STATEMENT OF CONVICTION

After receiving death threats in July, 1995, members of the Christian Peacemaker Team in Hebron issued a statement that detailed what they would like to have happen should they be injured or killed in the course of their work. The Hebron team reissued this "Statement of Conviction" on November 25, 1996, upon hearing both Israelis and Palestinians predict some imminent violent disaster.

The team has enjoyed positive relationships with most people in the tense city of Hebron including selected members of the Israeli Defense Force. Militant Israeli settlers have accused CPTers of being members of Hamas, a Muslim group with an armed wing.

This statement calls for the removal of all persons who have guns and encourages an end to all U.S. aid to Israel. The team urges people committed to nonviolence to take the same risks that soldiers are asked to assume in order to establish peace.

We reject the use of force to save our lives should we be caught in the middle of a conflict situation or taken hostage. In the event that we die as a result of some violent action, we reject the use of violence to punish the people who killed us.

Should our deaths come as a result of attacks by soldiers or settlers in Hebron, we ask that our deaths be regarded as no more tragic than the murders of dozens of Palestinians who have died here in the last decade. We ask that all legal nonviolent means be taken to ensure that these deaths do not continue. We ask that the government of Israel follow the principle of logical consequences. People with guns who kill other people should be removed from society for that society's protection. Whether those people are soldiers, rabbis or students should make no difference.

At present, we feel safer walking through Palestinian neighborhoods than we do when we walk past the Israeli settlements in Hebron. However, should our lives be threatened by Palestinians, we ask that they be treated by the authorities in the same way as those authorities would treat Israelis intent on harming us. If more Palestinian blood is shed by Israelis on our account, then our deaths will indeed be in vain. We think it is possible that a collaborator or unstable individual could be encouraged to harm us, and ask that this possibility be investigated in the event of our deaths. We also ask that the people who care about us look into the root causes of violence found amongst oppressed peoples struggling for liberation.

All of us who are part Christian Peacemaker Teams recognize there are certain risks inherent in this work. We believe that until people committed to nonviolence are willing to take the same risks for peace that soldiers are willing to take for war, people will always choose violence as the most viable solution to their problems. If our deaths promote the sort of soul-searching that leads to a rejection of armed conflict characteristic of this occupation then our deaths will indeed have redemptive value. Following the central tenet of our faith, we do not hate the people who have harmed us (Matthew 5:44-45.) We believe that those best able to love their enemies will ultimately emerge the victors in this bloody conflict.