

The Wall Museum

A Project of the Sumud Story House of the Arab Educational Institute

In recent years, a so-called "Wall Museum" of posters has been created on the Separation Wall near Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, Palestine. An initiative of the Sumud Story House of the Arab Educational Institute, it is designed to communicate real-life Palestinian women's stories. The stories of suffering and oppression as well as 'sumud' (steadfastness or resilience), inner strength and cultural identity are chosen to bring out the truth of Palestinian life, which the Wall tries to hide and kill. They are written or chosen by Palestinian women's groups who convene at the Sumud Story House. The project is made possible through sponsorship of individual posters. Visitors of Bethlehem are invited to visit the museum. Through individual sponsorship, the "museum" will gradually expand. The Sumud Story House is part of the Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem, affiliated to Pax Christi.

Below are some of the stories that recently have been collected, plus photos showing the encroachment of the Wall on Rachel's Tomb.

For more information on the Wall Museum, please visit: http://www.aeicenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=152:wall-museum&catid=42:front-page&Itemid=209

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Through the drainage pipe

My husband used to go to Jerusalem for his work but because of checkpoints and permit problems, he was forced to travel through the Wadi Nar by-pass road to the east of Jerusalem. Frequently there were mobile checkpoints on this road. One day, my husband and his friend escaped the Israeli soldiers, who were on the look out, by crawling through an underground drainage system. In the end, they reached their workplaces safely.

Arlene from Bethlehem

Supported by Friends of Young Bethlehem
Gouda, Netherlands

Heritage

Once I was at an Arts and Heritage Exhibit in Tel Aviv. An Israeli lady approached me while I was touring the exhibition and told me, "This is our heritage." I responded quickly, "No, this is our Palestinian heritage." The Israeli woman brought a book with the title "Qawar of Jordan," to show it was not Palestinian heritage. I looked into it. It was written by a Palestinian author living in Jordan.

Therese from Bethlehem

Supported by Women in Black
Groningen, Netherlands

I am steadfast

I am a town councillor. I work hard inside my house: cooking, doing my daily tasks at home, taking care of my husband and children while at the same time working to earn a living. I also try to volunteer and participate in public activities. My friends and family strengthen my sumud (steadfastness) and encourage me, as a woman, to work in the fields of peace-building, Christian-Muslim living together, and interreligious and intercultural communication skills.

Fayza, from Doha, south of Bethlehem

Supported by Ruben de Jong
Rotterdam, Netherlands

House demolition

One day I went to the village of Al-Walajah west of Bethlehem accompanied by students from France. We went there to visit families whose houses had been demolished by Israeli soldiers. As we approached the small house, I saw a large heap of stones nearby that had once been a family home. The mother and the father welcomed us and the students started asking questions. The house looked so familiar...and then I discovered that the mother was one of my students whom I taught at Bethlehem Secondary School for Girls. Oh poor Siham! She told us that her house had been demolished twice in one year. But it was built again by ICAHD*.

*ICAHD: Israeli Committee Against House Demolition

Jala', from BeitSahour

Supported by Annemie de Boeck
Edegem, Belgium

The bell

During the first Intifada, Israeli soldiers came to our neighborhood looking for teenage activists. They asked for them but did not find them. They kept ringing the bell of our house but we didn't open the door. At last my mother had a clever idea to stop them ringing the bell. She put off the electricity! The soldiers became angry and started shouting. When my mother finally opened the door the soldiers were very aggressive, "Why did you put off the electricity?" She answered

quietly, "It was an electricity cut." One of the soldiers went to the electricity meter and kept the bell ringing in response to what my mother had done.

Randa from Bethlehem

Supported by Mary C. Grey
Twickenham, UK

We lost below zero

The Wall affected our economic situation in a terrible manner. As we say in Arabic, "We lost below zero." My husband and I had a drugstore and a store in Bethlehem for different kinds of products. We had twenty-three people working for us; twenty-three families lived from our business. But because the stores are close to the Wall, and people do not like to come there, there are no employees anymore.

Melvina from Bethlehem

Supported by Japke van Malde
Leiden, Netherlands

I am a dying woman

All my life was in Jerusalem! I was there daily: I worked there at a school as a volunteer and all my friends live there. I used to belong to the Anglican Church in Jerusalem and was a volunteer there. I arranged the flowers and was active with the other women. I rented a flat but I was not allowed to stay because I do not have a Jerusalem ID card. Now I cannot go to Jerusalem; the Wall separates me from my church, from my life. We are imprisoned here in Bethlehem. All my relationships with Jerusalem are dead. I am a dying woman.

Antoinette from Bethlehem

Supported by Martin Kofflard
Rotterdam, Netherlands

Stand-off

I went to the checkpoint with my children after getting my Easter permit at the parish. As always, our rings and jewelry had to be put in the basket to go through the metal detector. My nine-year old daughter took off her bracelet. She went in and out of the metal detector several times, each time taking off something new but the machine kept beeping. Then the female soldier asked her to take off her pants, right there, in public. Would you allow your daughter to take her pants off just like that, with everybody around? I told the soldier, "Why can't you take her somewhere private to

search her?" She asked me to go back to Bethlehem. I told her, "You have nothing to do here, go back yourself to Tel Aviv."

Mary, from Bethlehem

Supported by Caritas, Jerusalem

The Wall is on my heart

After the Wall around Rachel's Tomb was built, I felt terrible. Nobody was walking here, only the cats and dogs. The wall creates a feeling...the feeling that it surrounds you; that you are not permitted to move. Every time, every day you see the Wall. When I look outside through the window to see the sunrise or the sunset the Wall is in front of me. When I go to the Wall I feel that something closes in on my heart, as if the Wall is on my heart....When I see the Wall I also feel ashamed of myself, because it is created by human beings.

Melvina, from Bethlehem

Supported by Lenie van Malde
Amsterdam, Netherlands

Baking bread

In the Jalazon refugee camp, north of Ramallah, during a curfew the Israeli military severed the supply of gas and electricity. The women made a communal fire, which was kept burning with old shoes and rags when the wood had run out. When the soldiers came to put the fire out and throw away the dough, the women resisted, shouting: "Go tell your leaders no matter what you do, no matter what kind of restrictions you impose upon us, we will not allow our children to starve. We will find a way to bake bread, and all your efforts to destroy our spirits are not going to succeed. What God has created, no one can destroy!"

From: Jean Zaru, "Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks"

Supported by TheaHesselink
Enschede, Netherlands

The baby and the soldiers

Israeli soldiers were beating up a man in a crowded street. From all sides people rushed to the scene. Suddenly a woman with a baby came forward to the man and shouted: "Why is it always you who makes problems and goes to demonstrations! I am fed up! Take this baby of yours! I don't want to see you ever again." She laid the baby in the hands of the man, and ran away. The soldiers

left the scene in confusion. When quiet came, the man returned the baby to the woman. They had never seen each other before.

A story from Nablus during the first Intifada (the late 1980s)

Supported by Marijke Verhage
Haarlem, Netherlands

Rescue

During one of the Intifada days, I, a young Palestinian woman, was four months pregnant and lost my baby because of Israeli tear gas. I was terribly depressed since it was the second miscarriage I suffered. A week later I visited a medical doctor in Jerusalem for a check up. Coming out of the doctor's clinic, I saw, nearby, on top of an escalator an Israeli child who was recklessly playing and about to fall down. Thoughts rushed through my mind. Should I leave him and let him die the way the Israeli soldiers let my boy die a week ago, or should I make a desperate attempt to grab him? All of a sudden, I felt an impulse that made me hurry forwards. Throwing myself in front of the boy I prevented his fall.

Sylvana, from Bethlehem

Supported by Thom Geurts
Tilburg, Netherlands

Tax revolt

During the first Intifada the people of BeitSahour had quite a lot of verbal confrontations with Israeli soldiers. The people organized a tax revolt under the banner of the American civil war: "No taxation without representation." They refused to pay taxes and after some weeks, the Israeli army came to each of their houses, one by one, to confiscate household items. After their houses had been emptied some of the BeitSahouri women told the soldiers, "Please stay, you forgot something. You cannot leave without my curtains."

Rana, BeitSahour

Supported by Hiltje Wuite-Harmsma
Hengelo (Ov), Netherlands

Return

When I was in Lebanon, I went to the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. We were carrying flowers to take to the collective graveyard that commemorates the massacres of Sabra and Shatila in 1982.

On the way I met a woman who was in her late sixties. She asked me: "Where are you from?" "I come from Bethlehem, Palestine," I replied. She hugged me and kissed me. She even wanted to kiss my hand and she started to cry. She didn't want to leave me, and she said, "Please take me with you."

Jizelle, a teacher from BeitJala

Supported by Sonja van Wier
Gersloot, Netherlands

On the ground

I am a Ukrainian woman married to a Palestinian man. During one of the last incursions of the second Intifada, Israeli soldiers gathered all members of my family in the house and ordered them to lie on the floor. At the time I was pregnant, but they forced me to lie on the floor too, along with my children. We had to stay on the floor for four hours while the soldiers were watching TV in our house. At one point, one of the soldiers started to laugh and throw sweets at us while we laid there.

Irina, living in Bethlehem.

Supported by Machtild and Johannes
Aachen, Germany

Worries

Once during the second Intifada, I was at my home in Bethlehem while my husband worked at a restaurant in BeitSahour. All of a sudden, relatives and friends started to phone me to ask about my husband. I called his phone, but he did not answer. Then, I heard the sounds of shooting. I put on the TV to see what was going on. There was breaking news that a man had been killed at my husband's restaurant. I became very worried but there was nothing I could do. Late in the evening, to my great relief, my husband came back home safely. He explained to me that he and other workers had to hide behind the walls of the restaurant during the Israeli shelling.

Ghada, from Bethlehem

Supported by Rosemarie Wechsler
München, Germany

Reaching out

The Wall is like a sign to say: "Go away from here." It is intimidating. If you go from the checkpoint toward Gilo you can see all the land that was taken for its construction, and the land what we can no longer access. Some of the land had belonged to my grandparents. Despite everything, we must continue to resist. To continue with our daily life is a form of resistance. One example of resistance is coming every day to the Sumud Story House. The Israelis want to stop our lives by pushing us out. We can resist with any sign of life, and any activity helps, because activities make people want to stay here. You can organize a concert or another cultural activity. These are ways that we can reach the world and the world can reach us.

Rima, from Bethlehem

Supported by Heleenter Ellen
Brussels, Belgium

Stuck

You drive next to the Wall (near Qalandia) but there are also buildings bordering the other side of the road. They built the Wall in the middle of the street and you're stuck between it and the buildings in a narrow channel, like cattle. You know what happens with cattle: the cattle are lined up and the machine takes them one by one while they can't move, like in a cage. The same happens to us. You cannot run away. You cannot backtrack. You cannot go left or right. You are stuck between the Wall and the other buildings. You're in a line and whatever happens, you cannot act on your own or control your own destiny. This happens all the time.

Maha, from Ramallah

Supported by Gerard van Breevoort
Amsterdam, Netherlands

Rachel's Tomb

A holy place for Christians, Moslems and Jews, Rachel's Tomb is located inside Bethlehem town along the traditional Jerusalem-Hebron road. Although originally the Oslo Accords included it in Area A (under Palestinian control), Rachel's Tomb at the end became part of Area C (under Israeli control). During the second Intifada from September 2000 on, Rachel's Tomb became a focal point of clashes. A wall and tower were built. In 2003, the Israeli government ordered the de facto annexation of Rachel's Tomb in violation of international law. The tomb became enclosed within the Jerusalem municipal boundaries. In summer 2005, the illegal 8-10 meter high Wall was built around Rachel's Tomb and an adjacent military base. The tomb is now connected to Jerusalem by a road isolated from the environment. It cannot be reached from Bethlehem.

Map of Rachel's Tomb



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/7999679@N05/479592488/>

P.S. Some of the headings in this map have to be adapted:

- New Israeli Wall" should be: "Israeli Wall"
- Israeli new tourist checkpoint should be: "Israeli checkpoint"

Historical photos of Rachel's Tomb



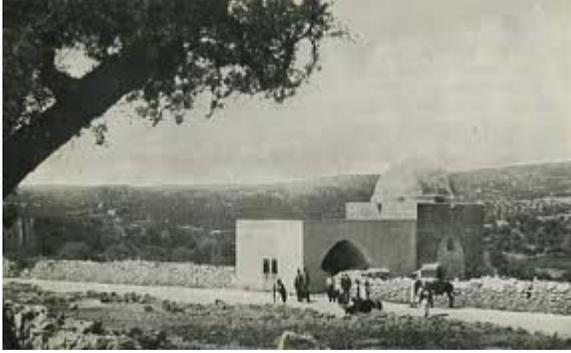
Visitors to Rachel's Tomb, early 20th century

http://www.google.com/imgres?q=rachel%27s+tomb+1996&hl=en&safe=vss&biw=1024&bih=605&tbnid=7cAofDFdUSmkyM:&imgrefurl=http://www.israeldailypicture.com/2011/07/picture-day-rachels-tomb.html&docid=6g0eajXZmYhZNM&imgurl=http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-pC5gc_gKLy8/Tre0UBxnqcl/AAAAAAAAAB9c/M5HsdSVwDo0/s1600/rachel%252Btomb%252Bvisitors.jpg&w=819&h=768&ei=M6fIT4yBOcWxhAeTrem9CQ&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=751&vpy=275&dur=3916&hovh=217&hovw=232&tx=149&ty=98&sig=105809755265159687618&page=1&tbnh=130&tbnw=140&start=0&ndsp=15&ved=1t:429,r:14,s:0,i:116



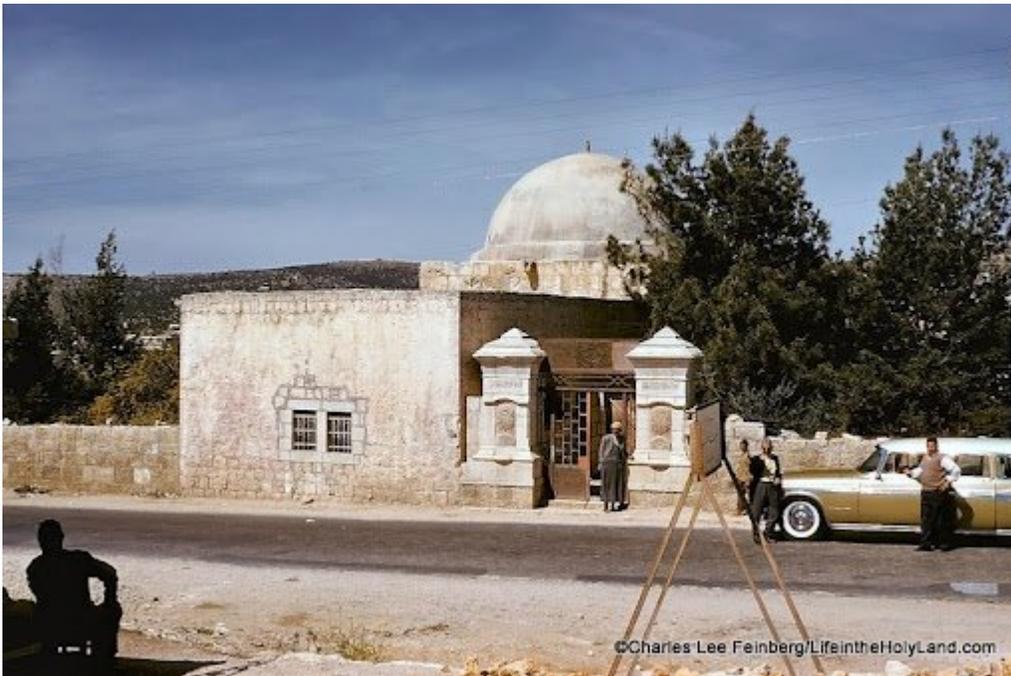
During the 1930s, British soldiers making checks

http://www.google.com/imgres?q=british+soldiers+at+rachel%27s+tomb&hl=en&safe=vss&sa=X&biw=1024&bih=605&tbn=isch&prmd=imvns&tbnid=g7ob5VOP49oniM:&imgrefurl=http://www.israeldailypicture.com/2011/07/picture-day-rachels-tomb.html&docid=6g0eajXZmYhZNM&imgurl=http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-tLeFn3C5j_0/Tre4haHZ1YI/AAAAAAAAAB90/Gz62OnzJ878/s1600/rachel%252Btomb%252Bscots.jpg&w=867&h=640&ei=Tb0HULujO6mw0AWzrv38BA&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=109&vpy=156&dur=714&hovh=131&hovw=183&tx=133&ty=109&sig=105809755265159687618&page=1&tbnh=131&tbnw=183&start=0&ndsp=15&ved=1t:429,r:0,s:0,i:75



Rachel's Tomb in 1944

http://www.google.com/imgres?q=rachel%27s+tomb+1950s&hl=en&safe=vss&sa=X&biw=1024&bih=605&tbn=isch&prmd=imvns&tbnid=W4nUzih7Xqb4mM:&imgrefurl=http://www.dabdoub.ps/gallery.htm&docid=OPNo_FdiZAUaaM&imgurl=http://www.dabdoub.ps/images/Rachel%252520Tomb%2525201944.jpg&w=487&h=299&ei=eL4HUUjANaj80QXW-6TYBA&zoom=1&iact=rc&dur=371&sig=105809755265159687618&page=2&tbnh=108&tbnw=176&start=15&ndsp=20&ved=1t:429,r:8,s:15,i:150&tx=104&ty=89



During the 1960s

http://www.google.com/imgres?q=rachel%27s+tomb+1991&hl=en&safe=vss&biw=1024&bih=605&tbn=isch&tbnid=qRneGgBjxmiwCM:&imgrefurl=http://blog.bibleplaces.com/2010/11/rachels-tomb-bible-vs-tradition.html&docid=AFIfn05WVpVGBM&imgurl=http://lh3.ggpht.com/_x4Gor5dqvi8/TNq7cjveLTI/AAAAAAAAABvY/Xlz0pqHYaRY/Bethlehem%252520Rachel%2527s%252520Tomb,%252520cf12-26%25255B3%25255D.jpg&w=512&h=339&ei=zaHIT4WxEIvf8QPmPlmuCg&zoom=1&iact=rc&dur=425&sig=105809755265159687618&page=1&tbnh=126&tbnw=168&start=0&ndsp=15&ved=1t:429,r:3,s:0,i:81&tx=96&ty=80



Rachel's Tomb after the Israeli occupation in 1967

http://www.google.com/imgres?q=rachel%27s+tomb+1995&hl=en&safe=vss&biw=1024&bih=605&tbnid=NoaH9XJWGbY8M:&imgrefurl=http://www.alternativetours.ps/cmsms/index.php%3Fpage%3Dbethlehem&docid=ydsDGzB6EjXpjM&imgurl=http://www.alternativetours.ps/cmsms/uploads/images/ATs/rachels_tomb.jpg&w=480&h=291&ei=oaXIT9aaO83B8OOMyfWdCg&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=582&vpy=208&dur=6123&hovh=175&hovw=288&tx=138&ty=102&sig=105809755265159687618&page=2&tbnh=98&tbnw=161&start=15&ndsp=20&ved=1t:429,r:8,s:15,i:147



During the 1990s

http://www.google.com/imgres?q=rachel%27s+tomb+1992&hl=en&safe=vss&biw=1024&bih=605&tbn=isch&tbnid=7KrNIYX66tJPoM:&imgrefurl=http://eczp.blogspot.com/2010_11_01_archive.html&docid=3gnHUU-BJcByGM&imgurl=http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_CM-Yj2FYJg/TNgS44CZPDI/AAAAAAAABXs/mhvhMbyWull/s1600/rachels-tomb-new1.jpg&w=894&h=564&ei=j6LIT7QBhe7xA9Wk5eIk&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=573&vpy=296&dur=14817&hovh=178&hovw=283&tx=82&ty=122&sig=105809755265159687618&page=1&tbnh=129&tbnw=186&start=0&ndsp=15&ved=1t:429,r:8,s:0,i:97



Rachel's Tomb area during the building of the Wall, 2003

http://www.google.com/imgres?q=rachel%27s+tomb+1994&hl=en&safe=vss&biw=1024&bih=605&tbm=isch&tbnid=a1vwu-17Mj9K5M:&imgrefurl=http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php/component/content/article/28-news/2985-israel-suspends-ties-with-unesco-&docid=rIE6O5CKP3k6mM&itg=1&imgurl=http://www.alternativenews.org/english/images/stories/news/2010/november_2010/rachel_tomb.jpeg&w=600&h=449&ei=gKPIT7C0OYmg8QP_2KmpCg&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=284&vpy=222&dur=1035&hovh=194&hovw=260&tx=196&ty=116&sig=105809755265159687618&page=1&tbnh=133&tbnw=181&start=0&ndsp=15&ved=1t:429,r:11,s:0,i:107