



MICHAEL RIORDON

OUR WAY TO FIGHT

PEACE-WORK UNDER SIEGE IN ISRAEL-PALESTINE



5 Witness

From the plateau on the Palestinian side, a curtain of dust blurs the Jordanian mountains.

The temperature on this October day is 40 degrees. Daphne Banai tells me it's hotter in the summer.

At its north end the Jordan Valley forms the border between Jordan and Israel, in the south between Jordan and the Palestinian West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967. The valley is the only link between the West Bank and the outside world.

We descend into the valley, on a road that curls through smoothly rounded hills the colour of pale sand. It's hard for me to imagine how anything could grow here. "Oh," says Daphne, "but by the end of winter it's very, very green, with the most beautiful flowers. Much of the year, though, it's true, the land is difficult. To survive here, you have to know what you're doing and your needs have to be small. As my Palestinian friends here tell me, we don't want more than we have, we're not interested in the things of modern life. We just want to be left alone, to live as we always did."

This is Daphne Banai's Machsom Watch beat.

On another searing day, Neta Efrony and I face a wall of steel, concrete and soldiers. Earlier this morning Neta heard that tension was already building at Kalandia, among the largest of several hundred Israeli military checkpoints across the West Bank. Like many others, it is not located protectively on the border with Israel, but aggressively inside Palestinian territory between the city of Ramallah, the town of Al-Ram, and the Kalandia refugee camp.

Every weekday, thousands of Palestinians must get through it to reach work, school, hospital, relatives, places of worship or markets in the hub of East Jerusalem, only a few kilometres from here. Today, the second Friday in the holy month of Ramadan, more than 100,000 people have come to pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, a revered holy site in East Jerusalem. They wait at the barriers, a sea of pilgrims from across the West Bank. Many have been here since dawn.

By 9 a.m. the heat is fierce. I stay close to Neta, who moves purposefully along the barriers. She has witnessed and recorded here for seven years, as the checkpoint grew from a barrier in the road to a fortress. Kalandia is Neta's Machsom Watch beat, as the Jordan Valley is Daphne Banai's.

VERY MUCH A ZIONIST

Born in Wales in 1949, Daphne Banai emigrated to Israel four years later with her parents. After her father died, her mother remarried and moved to France. Still a minor at 16, Daphne went along, but not happily. "I was very much a Zionist, and at 18 I returned here to go to the army. That meant defying my mother, who was strongly against my coming back. There was a big clash, and they wouldn't talk to me, so I was on my own here for two years." After the army she went to make peace with her mother, but soon returned to Israel. "This is my place", she says. "It's who I am."

During the 1970s, Daphne became curious about the Arabs who had remained inside Israel after the 1948 and 1967 wars. "All I knew was that they were the bad guys, we were the good guys, we were forced to fight them, they ran away, end of story. For some reason I developed a strong urge to talk to the bad guys, to hear their stories. But I found that no one among my family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, knew a single Arab."

By chance, at a parent-teacher meeting in the early 1980s, she met an Israeli who hosted monthly meetings in her house, Jews and Arabs together. There Daphne encountered her first Palestinian-Israeli. "To this day she is my best friend", says Daphne. "But the first time I went to visit her home in Tira, I was scared shitless. My husband and children insisted that I call them as soon I got there. This is how we were brought up in this country, to be petrified of Arabs."

In 1948 Jewish military forces expelled her friend's family from Miska, their village. Due to their ties with a local Jewish family, they were allowed to rent a house in nearby Tira, instead of being sent into exile with most of their former neighbours. Later they tried to return to the village, but Israeli bulldozers had flattened it. A few years ago, Daphne and her Palestinian friend placed flowers among the ruins.

After the dialogue group, Daphne immersed herself in Sadaka Reut, a youth movement that builds relationships of equality between Palestinian and Jewish young people. "But all these experiences were

inside Israel”, she says. “The Occupied Territories were over there, and I had the feeling that issues there would be solved by some two-state political process that didn’t have much to do with me.”

Late in 2000, the second intifada erupted. Over the next two years, Daphne joined food and medicine convoys to Palestinian villages under siege by the army. “Once you see the gap between the comfort and normality of our lives, and the awful insecurity of the occupied, who don’t know when they will be shot, arrested, humiliated, harassed, able to put food on the table – it gets you more and more involved. Eventually it became an obsession.”

HOLES IN THE WALL

Neta was born in Jerusalem, “a long time ago”, she says with an enigmatic smile. She recalls an earlier wall, the Green Line that cut through Jerusalem for two decades between the 1948 and 1967 wars. “We used to go and peek through holes in the wall. On the other side we saw only ordinary people doing ordinary things, children like us, cars. This was a surprise, because we lived on propaganda and grew up believing the Arabs are monsters.”

How did she see them? “I just saw them as people”, she replies. “But I didn’t go very deeply into what they might want or need. They worked here, we mingled with them – it seemed natural, like some kind of honeymoon. Most people felt that things could go on like this for ever.”

The two intifadas ended the honeymoon. By the time of the second, Neta had retired from her job as a documentary-maker at the Israel Broadcasting Authority and was travelling abroad. “When I came back I wanted to be active,” she says, “not just to sit and think about what was wrong, but to do something with my legs.” In 2002 she joined MachsomWatch.

Machsom translates as “barrier”, or the softer official word, “checkpoint”. In winter 2001, hearing that Palestinians were being beaten by soldiers at checkpoints, five Israeli women decided to see for themselves. What they saw moved them to form an organization of women with three goals: to monitor the behaviour of the military – at checkpoints and then later at military courts; to monitor and defend Palestinian human and civil rights, and to bear witness by reporting what they witnessed. They decided to limit membership to women, on the assumption that Israeli men were more likely to provoke the soldiers.

At its peak, MachsomWatch had some 400 members, now about 200, ranging in age from their forties to their eighties. Members monitor checkpoints across the West Bank, particularly in the early morning and late afternoon when the most Palestinians are trying to pass through. Occasionally, MachsomWatchers will intervene with soldiers, but mostly they watch, listen and record. The resulting reports, photos and videos are published on the MachsomWatch website. Members talk to the Israeli media whenever they can, and to anyone who'll listen in other countries. "It's important that people know as much as possible what's going on here," says Neta. "What we would really like is to end the occupation. It's a little bit difficult, I should say." Her trace of a smile sharpens the irony.

Daphne Banai's first MachsomWatch shift is burned into her memory. She went with another woman to Abu Dis, a Palestinian village in East Jerusalem where beatings had been reported at the checkpoint. In the village, they were terrified. "We were surrounded by Palestinians," Daphne recalls, "and every one of them I saw as a terrorist who was going to blow himself up or stab me. Most people in Israel are driven by this kind of fear, we're brainwashed with it."

At the checkpoint things were worse than they had heard. "Thousands of people were trying to get through, elderly ones fainting in the heat, livestock dying, soldiers pushing and screaming. There was a woman in labour, they wouldn't let her ambulance through. We called higher officers on the phone, and gradually people started to pass through. But still they wouldn't let the ambulance go. We told the soldiers we wouldn't leave until they let this woman pass. Finally, toward seven or eight, they did. As we walked to our taxi, the ambulance stopped farther down the road, its horn blaring. The doctor got out, he shouted, 'Ladies, ladies, *shukran*, thank you!' We both burst out crying. At that moment we knew this is what we wanted to do."

KALANDIA, 8.45 a.m.

Neta moves slowly around the soldiers, close to the barriers and the Palestinians. She records what she sees with a small video camera, now and then with a still camera.

Women and men are divided into two streams, along with children of the same sex. Women press to the barriers. Many wear black robes, and multi-hued headscarves. They argue and plead with the soldiers, holding out the Israeli-issued ID cards that govern all movement for Palestinians. Soldiers bar their way, either silently or

shouting Arabic words that Neta translates as “Stop”, “Get back!” She adds, “I’m sure this is the only Arabic the soldiers know.”

A small girl cries, likely from hunger and thirst after several hours standing under the sun. A woman – her mother, I assume – drizzles bottled water over her head. The girl’s face lights with a giddy smile.

To our left, rolls of razor-wire merge into a concrete wall two storeys high, and overlooking it, a guard tower with opaque slit windows. Neta tells me that this portion of the wall has the comforting official name, “the Jerusalem envelope”. The bland insult of it is interrupted by defiant graffiti: “This wall will fall, Ctl + Alt + Delete”.

After recording here for six years, in 2009 Neta Efrony distilled her impressions into a one-hour video, *Kalandia*, her second since she joined MACHSOMWATCH. The first, *To Build a Wall*, documents how the advancing wall gradually imprisoned Abu Dis. It features the same qualities that Neta would develop further in *Kalandia*: quiet, unflinching observation of painful realities, and sparse personal commentary.

A couple of minutes into the video she tells us – in her own words but through the less-accented English of a narrator, “My first time at Kalandia, I wept.” On a winter day, her camera watches an elderly man with a cane gingerly navigate a pile of rubble. When he slips and falls, her gasp is audible. Other Palestinians help him to his feet.

JORDAN VALLEY, 9 a.m.

Kicking up small dust-storms, Daphne’s car bumps over a parched, rock-strewn field to reach two shepherds she spotted from the road. At the end of the field, rows of plastic greenhouses and a barbed-wire fence mark Roi, an Israeli agricultural settlement. We exchange “*Marhabas*” with the shepherds, weather-burned men in their thirties. One of them hands her an official-looking document, which she translates from Hebrew into halting Arabic. She tells me later that she’s learning Arabic.

After we move on, Daphne explains the document: the shepherds are no longer allowed to cross the road with their sheep, and will be fined 1,000 shekels if they do. It’s an unthinkable sum to people who live as marginally as these shepherds. “All these rules are completely arbitrary”, says Daphne, her voice tight with anger. “It’s nothing but harassment, anything to make their lives more difficult.”

On the road we pass concrete slabs bearing a stark warning in Arabic, Hebrew and, mysteriously, English: “Danger. Firing zone. No entry.” In late May the army placed one of these next to each

Palestinian dwelling throughout the Jordan Valley. Hundreds of people received demolition orders, and soon after, soldiers arrived in the middle of the night to smash houses, tents, livestock corrals and water tanks. They shot sound bombs into sheep pens, and arrested many young men. All were released without charge after several days.

One day in mid-summer Daphne got a call from a community leader; he had just been informed that the army would be holding manoeuvres on their land, and they had three hours to evacuate. “I started raising hell”, she says. “I called the Associated Press, Reuters, human rights organizations, the UN, the British and US embassies, anyone I could think of. By eight in the evening, the army told the people that they didn’t have to leave, the manoeuvres had been postponed. After that the American ambassador came here, the assistant to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and a few other diplomats, people that Israel fears to offend too much. Then the demolitions stopped. But we know that as soon as the world stops taking notice, they’ll be back. It’s very simple. They want these people out of the way.”

KALANDIA, 10.30 a.m.

The sun climbs, the time of midday prayer approaches, but the soldiers are letting only a trickle of people through the barriers. The rule today is that only men over 50 and women over 45 may proceed to the terminal; the rest are sent away. Tomorrow the rule could be different. But people refused entry don’t leave, they’ve come too far to quit now; instead, they press closer and plead harder. Voices rise. More soldiers gather, some to stand atop concrete barriers with assault rifles ready.

I watch a woman with two young children confront a soldier, brandishing her ID card. She looks proud and fierce. He simply shakes his helmeted head. A few minutes later we notice that the trickle has stopped, now no one gets through. This, Neta tells me, is collective punishment.

Recognizing a senior officer, she walks over to speak with him. The two of them keep glancing toward the barrier. Returning, Neta shrugs. The officer told her he was pleased with the way things were going. But after a few minutes we see him talking to soldiers at the barrier, and the trickle resumes. Under military occupation the exercise of arbitrary control is routine, a reminder of who has power and who does not.

It strikes me that in addition to the devastating impact the occupation has on Palestinians, surely it must also damage young Israeli soldiers. “Yes, of course”, says Neta. “I think they are in an awful situation that my country sent them to, and I pity them. On the other hand, when I see soldiers or border police behaving badly because they hate Palestinians, I’m really angry at them. But in general I don’t think it’s their fault that they’re here. I wonder how their mothers can send them to serve.”

How much can MACHSOMWATCH women accomplish in situations like this? With hands spread, Neta shrugs eloquently. “We argue often about this in our group. Why should you call the army on the phone and ask them to open another gate? We are not there to improve the occupation. But on the other hand, if you don’t do it people suffer more. It’s a conflict. In some way we are helping the army. And I think in a way they know it; strangely, they may even appreciate us more than the common public opinion, which calls us traitors.”

JORDAN VALLEY, 11 a.m.

We stop at a checkpoint on a remote hill by an army base. Though Daphne’s beat now embraces the whole valley, monitoring checkpoints is still the primary task of MACHSOMWATCHERS. We apply sunscreen and don our hats.

This is one of three checkpoints that control all passage for Palestinians between the Jordan Valley and the rest of the West Bank. Given its location, miles from Israel, it is clear even to me that it has nothing to do with security, only control. “From 1967,” says Daphne, “Israel’s plan was to put settlers here, not religious ones but secular ones from kibbutzim, people with some farming background. The object was to annex the whole valley as soon as there were more Israelis than Palestinians. But despite all the special benefits they get, many Israelis left. Life was too hard for them here, too isolated. Religious Jews have been brought in, but not so many as before. Now there are maybe 6-8,000 Israelis in the valley, and about 55,000 Palestinians. So the aim of Israel now is to make the Palestinians leave. That’s why they demolish their dwellings, restrict their movement, and don’t let them have water.”

At the moment there is little traffic at the checkpoint. We watch soldiers stand idle, but still people are kept waiting. Daphne greets Palestinians – “*Salaam aleikum*” – who come through on foot. Most respond in kind; a few stop to chat. A young man laden with plastic

shopping bags tells her that yesterday the checkpoint was closed. The soldiers gave no explanation, they hardly ever do. “Come back tomorrow”, they say.

In a small yellow taxi-van waiting to go through, Daphne recognizes the driver, a thin man with receding grey hair and a clipped moustache. “He used to call us on his cellphone about abuses he saw at the checkpoint. But somehow the soldiers got onto him, and they beat him up. Now he doesn’t call any more.” Though we are in plain view, the man looks straight ahead. I think about the many instruments of terror.

While we stand in a small pool of shade, I asked Daphne how her role in MachsomWatch has evolved. “When I first joined, our aim was to help individual Palestinians to cross checkpoints, to prevent harm as much as we could. That’s still true – if I’m at a checkpoint and see a problem, of course I’ll do what I can to help. But we used to meet with high army officials to see how life could be made easier for the Palestinians. Eventually we decided to stop those meetings. They only enabled the checkpoints to control people better, then the officers could tell the world ‘We meet with these women and together we help the Palestinians.’ We don’t want to provide them with this kind of fig leaf.”

KALANDIA, NOON

Neta Efrony greets other MachsomWatchers as they circulate, take photos, talk to soldiers. One says to me in English, “It turns my stomach that we who went through all we did can now stop other people from worshipping at their holy place.”

When another member moves in close to take photos, the Palestinian woman who confronted the soldier – she still hasn’t got through – speaks sharply and waves her hand at the photo-taker, “Go away!” A MachsomWatcher translates: “She says, ‘All you do is click-click-click, and what does it do for us?’” Neta nods. “It’s true. A woman just asked me, ‘Please help me to get through, I only want to cross today, only today, only to pray.’ We’re Israeli so to them we must be powerful. But what can we do?”

While we watched two young soldiers turn away an elderly woman, a MachsomWatch member said to me, “Nothing will change here until the US and Europe put enough pressure on Israel to make it change.”

Here is the MachsomWatch dilemma, the dilemma of the witness. It’s familiar to me as a writer, having the power to observe, to

organize and convey impressions, and sometimes even to amplify muted voices from “the other side” – but beyond that, hardly any power at all.

Small groups of men slung with cameras gather on the near side of the barriers. “International press”, says Neta. “They’re waiting for the big show.” She points at adolescent boys hovering on the edge of the restless throng. As frustration builds, some of them may start throwing stones at the soldiers, and the soldiers will shoot. Several boys have been killed here in the past few years. This is the big show.

The number of soldiers has doubled now, on the ground and on the concrete blocks. Others uncover crates of what we assume to be tear-gas canisters – even the bold Neta is wary of going close enough to see.

Shortly after noon, the midday call to prayer rings out from loudspeakers in Al-Ram. Time is running out for people at the barrier. A tall man with a long greying beard, dark robe and white skull-cap climbs onto a boulder, and in a strong voice begins to recite passages from the Qur’an.

The journalists spring into action, honing in on the attentive crowd he gathers. Soon he descends from the rock, and leads a small crowd of men and a few women in prayer, kneeling on the stony ground. Photographers scramble in so close, they nearly fall over their subjects. Neta keeps a nervous eye on the restless boys hovering at the margins.

Here and there in her video, she inserts an introspective comment over a stark image. In one sequence, young soldiers argue over the papers of an elderly man in a suit and robe. Neta says, “Palestinians keep asking me, ‘What do we get out of this, what are you doing for us?’ What am I doing indeed, clearing my own conscience?” But then she says that other Palestinians insist, “Film this. Film this so people can see.”

Surely this is why she does it, so that people will see, and something will come of it? “I hope so”, says Neta. “But I’m not sure. I heard from another film director that there’s no chance for this film to be seen because Israelis are tired, the world is tired, nobody wants to hear about this any more. So I don’t know if my film will have any influence, or even if it will be shown.”

JORDAN VALLEY, 2.30 p.m.

As a murky sun slides down the wide sky, we pass two men sitting on a mound of earth beside their tractor, near a closed gate that

seems to lead nowhere. Daphne backs up the car. “I want to talk to them”, she says. “That gate should be open by now.”

There is no wall or fence here; the gate is a steel bar on a hinge between two concrete blocks. Beyond it a rough track winds away into the hills. The men tell Daphne in Arabic that they’re waiting for the gate to be opened so they can go visit their kids, who stay with relatives in the village in order to attend school there. She explains to me, “The army is supposed to open this gate three times a week, for an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon, so people can get to Tamun for supplies, school or to visit relatives.”

The naïve Canadian asks: since there’s nobody here, why don’t they just go round? Daphne leads me to a ditch left of the gate. It’s filled with coils of razor-wire. “These ditches run parallel to the roads all along here, so that no one can cross except through the gates. One day I came here and found that not only had the army neglected to open the gate, they had also forgotten to lock it. It was winter, quite cold, so I said to the people waiting, ‘Go through, I’ll take responsibility.’ They said, ‘No, no, we can’t.’ They were right, I should never have said that. Just over there is a guard tower; you can’t see it from here, but they see everything. If anyone sneaks through, it’s very likely he will be caught. And while they wouldn’t do much to me, the consequences for a Palestinian would be very bad. Finally I called the army, I said, ‘Look, if you don’t come and open the gate I will!’ They came in ten minutes.”

At this point she resorts to a similar call. Her manner on the phone is calm, matter of fact, not aggressive. In less than ten minutes an army jeep arrives. Ignoring Daphne, the soldiers unlock the gate and swing it open. Then, taking their time, they inspect the tractor. Under her breath, Daphne says, “I know this officer. He’s a brute.” Eventually they let the two men go, and depart in their jeep. We watch the tractor until it disappears in slow motion over the brow of the hill.

KALANDIA, 1 p.m.

At the barrier, people continue to argue and plead, the soldiers turn them away with shouts and gestures. They could be herding cows.

An older woman who gets through the outer barrier raises her hands to the sky in praise, her face bursting with relief to get this far.

On our drive to Kalandia, I commented to Neta about the mysterious accidents of birth by which I happen to be born in Canada, she in Israel, and the people on the other side of the barrier

in Palestine. “In Buddhism there are no accidents”, she replied, with a smile.

At about the same time she joined MachsomWatch, Neta attended a talk by a Tibetan Buddhist nun. It was transformative. “All that this woman said sounded so logical, so right to me, I fell immediately in love with these ideas. What was logical? That if there is no God, then we are responsible for what we do. Then, that everything in life is cause and effect. Then, that nothing in the world is by itself, everything is connected. And of course the psychological aspect of how to deal with anger, happiness, your emotions – all of it makes so much sense.”

The prayer concludes, the religious man stands and turns away from the barrier. The people he gathered follow him. Few Palestinians remain now at the barrier. Either they’ve got through, or they’ve given up and left. There are two more Fridays in Ramadan; they may try again. We watch half a dozen boys gesture and shout at the soldiers. Eventually, they too wander away. As soon as it’s clear there will be no big show today, the international journalists vanish. Neta and I stay for another hour – she wants to keep an eye on things.

Soldiers remove the steel barriers and a huge front-end loader bullies the concrete barriers aside. I comment to Neta that with these giant machines you can re-make reality any way you like. “Just like that”, she says, with a snap of her fingers.

The daily grind resumes. Men unload racks of bread and rolls from a van, and carry them by hand into the terminal. There they will be examined and passed through the metal detector. If the bread passes, other men with Jerusalem permits will load it onto other vans for delivery on the other side.

JORDAN VALLEY, 3.30 p.m.

Beside the settlement of Roi, with its ranks of plastic greenhouses ringed by razor-wire, we visit a shepherd family that Daphne knows. They live in a tent, really a tattered patchwork of old grain sacks and plastic sheet held aloft by a few poles. It has to be portable; since 2002 they have been evicted four times by the army, most recently because the settlers said they might hack into water pipes that irrigate the greenhouses. In fact, the father asked to buy water, but the settlers refused.

Today being Thursday, the gate to Tubas village will be open for an hour, so the father has gone to visit three of his children there;

they stay in a rented apartment with his other wife in order to attend school in the village.

We drink sweet, spicy sage tea with the younger wife and the children. They chat with Daphne and watch me, wide-eyed. One son has just returned from buying water in the village, three hours' drive each way on the tractor. They have to do this twice a day. Daphne tells me that the youngest daughter, now three, was born on one of the nights when soldiers destroyed their dwelling. They named her Sumud, which means "endurance", or "holding your ground".

Suddenly a grey-white rocket with stubby wings whooshes overhead and disappears down the valley. I'm the only one who looks up. Another follows a few minutes later, then another. This is the first time I've seen remote-controlled drones, the pilotless aircraft that the Israelis and Americans use for surveillance and bombing.

An older son reports that when he was tending the sheep on the other side of the settlement a month ago, settlers came with soldiers and beat him. "Then, just for fun," Daphne translates, "they surrounded the sheep, making smaller and smaller circles with their jeeps until they ran over three of the sheep." She adds, "For people who have so little, three sheep could be their income for a whole year."

Two of the girls bring us a pair of goat kids, born that morning, their eyes not yet open. Daphne and I hold them in our laps, small, woolly bodies with bony legs. Watching us, the children grin with delight. Except for Sumud, she just watches with a steady gaze.

Later, driving west into a livid dusk, I ask Daphne what being an Israeli means to her. She is silent for awhile, negotiating a corner where a flash flood washed out half the road last winter. Back on solid ground, she replies, "I'm a citizen, I live here. This is my culture, my way of life. But I have to say, I'm becoming more alienated all the time. The Gaza attack was a big crack in my sense of belonging. The atmosphere in Israel during that attack – rejoicing that more and more Palestinians were killed and hurt – that was intolerable to me. I have friends in Gaza, they called me when they were under attack, terrified. But many people in Israel wanted more victims. These are my people." She's quiet awhile, driving, then she adds, "Perhaps if I were younger I might decide to leave. But now, I don't know."

She sounds so torn, I'm moved to say, "It seems to me that when people leave here, it's because they want to be comfortable, to live in a place like Canada where it's even easier to ignore the suffering

of others. But you stay, you're willing to be uncomfortable, which means you must have strong feelings for the place."

"Yes", Daphne replies, "I have very strong feelings for Israel, but also about where it's going – to a terrible, terrible place. There might come a time when I have to say this is not my place any more, I don't belong here. Even now my work is abroad. (She books holiday apartments for Israelis on vacation.) But I don't see any other place where I would feel at home. If I'm abroad, I would be an Israeli abroad. I don't know exactly what it means, but this is who I am."

In July 2010, demolitions of Palestinian homes, encampments, water tanks and animal pens escalated sharply in the Jordan Valley. In each case the army offered the same standard excuse: the area was "a closed military zone". In 2001, following his first term as Prime Minister of Israel, Binyamin Netanyahu promised that if he regained office he would turn the entire Jordan Valley into a closed military zone.

Before she dropped me off at the train station in Tel Aviv, I asked Daphne Banai how she feels about the movement to boycott Israel. She sighs. "I really don't like that kind of action", she says. "It brings a lot of pain, and I'm not even sure it will work. But life is so comfortable in Israel, and if people don't care what harm they do to others, then we need more drastic action to make them realize that being occupiers also damages their own lives. That includes me; I have no doubt my business abroad will be hurt. But we can't go on like this. I don't see Israelis having the motivation to make real change unless something interferes with this good life we have. So I would say that, with very mixed feelings, I'm for it. I really can't see that we have any other choice."

COMPASSION

Neta Efrony's fears that no one will see her video turn out to be unwarranted. She has been invited to show the video at film festivals and solidarity events both in Israel and abroad. At some of these she is harangued by Zionists, which she finds wearing, but other people tell her *Kalandia* moved them to tears, and to action.

The video ends on a regular weekday, business as usual at the fortress-checkpoint. By dawn on a February morning, men seeking work on the other side are already packed into the outer hall, collateral damage from the occupation and a strangled economy. With hardly any movement through the chutes, there is time to talk.

“Look what they’re doing to people”, a grey-haired man says quietly to Neta’s camera. “Animals pass with more dignity.”

Some younger men clamber up the metal bars to balance precariously beside gleaming curls of razor-wire. Up there, at least they can see what’s happening. One of them waves at Neta to come up. Camera running, she scales the wall. Hands reach down to help. From above we see the entire hall, crammed with Palestinians, waiting.

In her voice-over, Neta takes us for a moment along her Buddhist path, “... a path that acknowledges no chosen people, no better or worse people. A path of compassion. Compassion is what we could be feeling towards one another. Compassion means that all sentient beings may live in bliss. Compassion means not just the self, but the other as well. I know compassion exists for us in Judaism too. But where is it? Where has it gone?”