

Scotland WFWP: The work of Ecumenical accompanier in Israel's West Bank

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The WFWPU Scotland hosted a talk by a human rights monitor Jean Byrne from the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

The Programme seeks to be fact-finding, based on observations of events, and informs the UN of its findings. Human rights abuses are recorded during the accompaniment of the shepherds in this case, in a village south of Bethlehem called Kisan, which is a shepherding village. Jean presented a video that provided a brief history of Israel's emergence in Palestine.

EAPPI is guided by "principled impartiality" Their presence also protects while they accompany people in their daily lives. In this instance, Jean accompanied a shepherdess named Sabah, who also held two university degrees and was an active member of the village council, as well as a mother of four children. A truly accomplished lady!

Jean outlined the great difficulties encountered by the shepherding village community. They sadly suffer aggressive behaviour from the "settlers" who gradually remove the land to build their properties with financial support from the Israeli authorities. She described the sabotaging of water supplies, violence, destruction of property, livestock theft and arbitrary arrests, which are a strategy to drive the local population away from the areas in demand by the settlers. It is a very fraught situation.

There are barriers to free movement across the region, with numerous checkpoints that can make short

journeys, such as attending hospital appointments, take hours.

Sabah said, "There is always a price for everything. Our voice must reach everyone"



Jean said we must never give up hope for peace when we witness the progress made in Northern Ireland, Berlin and South Africa.

There are compassionate peacemakers in the Middle East it was noted in later discussions. The challenges are clear. It was truly an education to hear first-hand about the suffering in this region from the perspective of the Palestinian people.