

A Method to the Madness

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The Occupation of the Palestinian Territories has been in existence for the past fifty years. There are numerous daily reminders to a Palestinian how this Occupation has wreaked havoc on their lives and the lives of their children. Few Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza are old enough to know what it is to walk freely without ID checks, without fear of being detained, arrested, having ones home broken into by soldiers and/or settlers, or just being able to move freely in their own town, let alone travel easily out of town.

The checkpoint is one of the most egregious obstacles in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and is a constant reminder to the Palestinian of their lack of ability to navigate through the town freely without having to pass through a metal detector at least once or twice a day on their way to work, school, shopping or just to visit a friend; always having to produce their ID often with bag checks, being detained at the whim of the Israeli Border Police often for long periods, causing teachers, children and adults to be late for school and work.

For those of us who have little or no experience in restrictions such as these, it is difficult to imagine the humiliation endured by the Palestinian, who is subjected daily to the whim of an Israeli Border Police or soldier, often twenty years younger who decides who will pass and who will not, who will have their purse, briefcase, bag checked, who will have questions fired at them, who will be chosen that day to be late for work or school. It is unconscionable.

Overtime the checkpoints in Hebron have grown in size and appearance. Due to the new convoluted walkway through the containers, the ability to observe and document any ill treatment taking place against a Palestinian by the Border Police is virtually impossible. We used to be able to take photos, videos, engage the Border Police in conversation, albeit, one way conversation. We could speak with the teacher or adult that was being detained and ask him how long he had been there or the reason given for why he was being held. The lack of contact has made our job as observers difficult, and for a Palestinian just one more piece of the Occupation to be endured.

There is an Arabic word, sumud. Translated it means 'steadfastness,' I believe it has an even stronger meaning in Arabic. Palestinians have a healthy dose of sumud and they continue to endure with dignity.