

Audio27J8 - Jahalin Bedouin -Angela Godfrey-Goldstein and Eid Jahalin

June 2012

Angela Godfrey-Goldstein took us on a tour of East-Jerusalem settlements and then to the Jahalin Bedouin village where we met Eid Jahalin. Angela translated for us and sometimes the conversation includes what Eid says interspersed with some things Angela says herself.

[Angela on the bus:]

... coming back to the main Jericho highway, which is called the Tel Aviv - Jordan Peace Highway. For the Bedouin here it is a far from peaceful road and you'll be hearing from Eid soon about all of this. This is the road that takes people to Jordan or to Saudi Arabia on the Haj. Also down to the Dead Sea and up to the Galilee, it is very much a military road as well. It has been developed, the whole area on the left over there is new. The road that goes up here to Ramallah is the border of E1. I'll show you later the maps and you'll see what I'm talking about as to E1. All of the Bedouin, 3000 or so, living at the side of these roads such as on the hill there ahead of you about 10 o'clock they all have eviction orders, they are not allowed to build even though they are the builders of the settlements, so they are very capable of building. They are living . . here we are in Area C, I don't know if you all know Areas A, B, and C. I see you're nodding thumbs up, good on you guys. E1 stands for East One and that's a planning thing as to Jerusalem, greater Jerusalem. So, all of these people, all of these Bedouin living here on the right and elsewhere are under military control and the Israeli civil administration is the branch of the army dealing with them.

So we're going to park here and I'm going to ask you to follow me very carefully because this is a busy road even though it's a Friday afternoon. We going to have to cross and you will notice that there is no access, some of you were here last year and there was access into that community, we could have driven in but nowadays you can't. We're going to cross together and we're going to try and get everyone across the road in one piece. So follow me and we'll take it slowly, we'll only cross when there is no traffic and we'll all cross at once, not in dribs and drabs.

[And then]

Part of the deception is that when the army came and closed it off a high ranking officer said that we will provide an alternative, and they haven't, I mean this is no alternative. And then they said to the Bedouin, you can build a road, we will give you a permit but we don't have money for it. So follow me and we're going to cross over as I said earlier all in one go.

[We cross a 4 lane highway with cars passing rapidly. There are 4 sets of guardrails we have to cross over and each guardrail has an extra bar on the inside which makes passing over them very difficult. We definitely feel unsafe because of the rapidly approaching cars.]

[Angela introduces the group to the Bedouin:]

They are all from the United States, Seattle, Denver Colorado, Iowa, Virginia, Portland Oregon, Berkeley California, That's interesting because the film that we made, Alice Walker made the narration and she recorded it at Berkeley in the University School of Journalism. Q: What's the name?

Nowhere Left to Go [see below for links]. It's worth seeing because Eid is one of the people in it but we also filmed in three or four other Bedouin communities so we covered all of the different issues and unusually managed to get an interview with the army which is not usual, the filmmaker director has a good contact with Time Magazine Video so the army agreed to do an interview for Time Magazine where they normally wouldn't for us. So we actually got the army saying, you know, the most ridiculous things that have nothing to do with their responsibilities.

[Angela now translates for Eid after we sit down in a tent on cushions.]

So he says welcome with a saying that says literally "My tent is your tent." Thank you for coming to see the situation of the Bedouin as it is. He's saying finally American people are coming here and he doesn't see many. I see many from Europe, Germany, France, United Nations people come here. He says for Americans to be here is the first or second time. Maybe you don't know much about the Bedouin and the situation here, but it doesn't matter, thank you very much that you did come. It doesn't matter to me what your religion is or your color. Eid is saying when you came here and you got out from the road and came into the camp somewhere in your thinking you would have gone a thousand years back. Because they think that these people, maybe you think that these people here don't want to make progress, but everybody in this world needs to be making progress. But somebody, if it's allowed for him to make progress, if people help him to progress, that's something.

But those are the two things we don't receive: permission to progress or help. Firstly, it's forbidden for us to do anything here: to build a home, or to make a school which you'll see afterwards. It's hard for us. And you're sitting here and everywhere you look you'll see electricity pylons but we don't have electricity and we're not allowed to. We are forbidden to do anything here. This wadi here, just down here, the wadi, the base of the valley, that is our border and the settlement two kilometers up here, they are our neighbors. So the settlers up there, they claim that this is all of their land. And our neighbors up there in that settlement they've been there for about twenty years now. And if you go in there you feel that you are going into a European town. They have a school there, they have a medical clinic there and they have everything. And who did this for them? The government, the Israeli government. But on this side, not even electricity is allowed to us.

We have two problems at the moment. On that side we have settlers and on the other side of the roads, 600 meters in, there are signs up declaring it a military zone from here all the way down to the Jordan Valley and there is not one single soldier to be seen there. And how do they prevent the Bedouin from accessing that land? They throw down various things maybe something sweet, and they booby trap it with explosives. It can be a lot of other things as well for example spectacles, or a pen, a watch, anything that catches the eye. And who's going to see over there? The shepherds, the Bedouin shepherds who are 13 year olds, 14 year olds. So when he's over there in the desert and he sees a pen or a new spectacle immediately he's going to pick it up (or she) and the minute he touches it there is an explosion. And we've had many Bedouin killed by this and many who are without their hands or without an eye and that's the military, the army that are doing that.

And apart from this, that's just one problem. Another problem is that the military came, first of all they take the hills and say that this is a military zone. And a year or two later the military leave and they give that land to the settlers and then the settlers move in, like in Ma'al Adumim or here Kfar Adumim. All of the settlements in this whole area that's exactly how it's worked, that the army comes, they're there for a year or two, they leave and then the settlement is established. And every piece of land here

has an owner and every single owner of land make a legal claim or go to court about the land and then in the end the court will say "These are settlers we can't do anything about it." But the question is how is the government providing them with water with electricity and building schools for them? On his part [Eid] thinks that the government is following the settlers wherever the settlers go.

Here we have many problems. Until recently we had 1600 head of herd, that would be sheep and goats, and 25 camels. Today we hardly have 140 head of herd and one camel left. And this has gone down to a 90% reduction in the last ten years. And it's because we've been closed off from both sides, we've been locked in almost like in a refrigerator. And also we used to have access to the market in Jerusalem so we were able to sell all of the products on a Friday at the Friday market. And that's the situation as to the general income of the Bedouin these days. We are WAY below the red line. And I just want to add that the United Nations with the world food program are feeding them on a massive amount of monthly food supplies because they are so food insecure. And the Bedouin tend to be very proud and he's not saying [Angela: but I'm saying] that they're getting one large sack of flour every three months and four liters of cooking oil, rice, sugar, lentils, salt.

And let's talk about education problems. Everywhere in the world, all of the laws, international law are more or less the laws that came down from God into the three monotheistic religions, the commandments and also the laws that people have created. All of these laws maintain that everybody has a right to education. But here we are forbidden to study. Number one, we didn't have a school here so we would have to go 22 kilometers down to the Jordan valley to Jericho or go all the way up to Anata (which is how we'll be going back). And it is very difficult because those places are very far away. And there's no way of getting the children there in terms of transport provided. Sometimes, in fact very often, the children are coming all the way back from Jericho on foot. That's 22 kilometers, because there is nobody to take them. And Bedouin therefore aren't sending their daughters to school because it's so difficult. And during this period 5 children were killed on the road here and 4 were made handicapped and the problem is it's not just the children who were killed on this road but what about the 3 or 4 or 5 friends who watched the accident and were traumatized. After this they would scream and they wouldn't want to go anywhere near the road. Even if their parents were taking them to the school themselves, it didn't help. So in 1990 we decided to make a school here and the army wouldn't give us a permit to build a school. So then we asked for a bus to take the children and we didn't get one. So when the PA started during the Oslo years we went to the PA and we asked them and THEY didn't allow it. We didn't get a bus. So in the end we decided we'll make a school here, we're forbidden to build with concrete or cement and these zinc buildings, it's not healthy because in the summer it just makes it more hot and in rain you don't hear anything because of the noise. So in the end we looked in the internet and we saw that in South America, in Brazil and Argentina, they're building from mud and old car tires, so we brought that design from there to here. And we went to the garbage dump and we brought a lot of used car tires from the garbage and we built the school here. Many people helped us, not just Bedouin, there was also many Europeans helped us and from the side of Israelis and two Catholic nuns, Licia and Aziza [spelling uncertain], also the sisters of Cambone [spelling uncertain], and Angela helped with some money from French solidarity and also a Dutch NGO because I was trying at the time to find enough money to buy a bus so we put it into finishing the school quickly. So when we started building IMMEDIATELY we got a stop work order. And then a few days later we got a demolition order. And to this day this school is like a person in an intensive care unit, every few months we have a new court case and different orders and so we don't know if it will survive.

And because Eid said he worked up there in Kfar Adumim [the settlement] for many years so he knows everybody up there. He went to speak with the people in the council offices up there in order to try and bring the children from that school or those schools down here to have twinning, to meet the school here. So that we could make a connection between the two schools. So first the people came here from the council offices, I gave them a tour of the school, and they said "wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, it's the first building in Israel made out of car tires" and they sat here in my home and drank tea and coffee and three days later I got a letter from the court, the settlers themselves brought a case with demolition order to, with a court case to have the school demolished. Why? They said the school is a threat to their security and number two it's built on their land.

And from then until this day they've come a few times to the school, they demolished the gates, they demolished the fence, broken the doors and windows, everything. And sometimes they come to make complications when children are leaving school at 12:30 at midday and they go round in their jeeps around the kids as if they're in a rally by the school and they have big guns and they push it out of the windows of their cars as if they're in a war. That's the settlers for you. And all of the newspapers, media, television the whole world says "oh, that's settlers, that's settlers, that's settlers" as if it's simple people who don't have any head. But as far as this settlement that's up there is concerned, there are four members of Knesset up there, the ex Israeli ambassador to Washington Salai Mirador, he lives up there, and the daughter of Menachim Begin and Danny Tirza who designed the route of the wall in the army, he lives there and others of the highest ranking in the government and also in the army.

So they are doing all of this deliberately to the Bedouin. And the most recent thing was a few days ago, this week they lost all of their water supply. Three people came, settlers, in the middle of the night and they cut off the water supply from the large water pipes, not the little pipes, I'm talking about the big metal water mains were completely attacked with large, not machinery, large tools.

[Angela: that looks like coffee . . . Small cups of Arabic coffee are brought in for us to drink]

And the same night they cut off the water supply they also put poison in the water supply into the well. So Bedouin when they don't have water, they went back to that water well to get some water and it's a poisoned water supply. People realized and they didn't drink the water. So we called the police and we caught them. So the police took the three as if they arrested them but immediately let them loose, released them. And by the way there is an Israeli organization called Yesh Din and it's more or less run by volunteer women many of whom used to be in Machsom Watch and they escort Palestinians who have suffered from settler violence to the local police station which are inside settlements because Palestinians aren't allowed in, they'll get to the gates of, whether it's Ma'al Adumim or Kiryat Arba or wherever and they'll say "no no, you have no place here." So with volunteer Israeli women they go in and lodge a complaint and a file is opened, but Yesh Din's statistics show that almost all of those files are closed with nobody being charged. So it's not achieving prison sentences or punishments or anything. But it's at least enabling more documentation of settler violence. Yes, he's saying you can't go into the settlements. That's the problem of studying [of education].

If only the school was in, yesterday was the last day of school. And if only you could see the school when it's running because the children are always worried if somebody's coming to close it, what are people here for, is the school going to be allowed to, now we don't know if it will open again next year. Because there is the demolition order on it, there is the court case from the settlers calling for it to be demolished and the Minister of Defense has said in reply to the Supreme Court that the school will be

relocated. What does that mean? I think it's another way of saying it will be demolished and moved, but we've done so much advocacy with various ministers from Britain or Sweden or France, Italy and so forth, UN that they are under enormous pressure. For example one woman, she is the EU High Commissioner for Humanitarian affairs, and she went to meet with Ehud Barak the minister of defense and he promised her that the school wouldn't be demolished so then when it comes to the court case we have her letter to him from December last year saying that "I remember in my meeting with you in May you promised me it wouldn't be demolished, I hope that promise keeps." So it's very difficult for Ehud Barak to say "Yes we are going to demolish the school" so now he says he's going to relocate it but nobody knows when.

Let's talk a bit more about education. Even if a Bedouin finishes school and goes through the final exam, they have 12 years in school and then there is a final exam. After 12 years of schooling then you go to university. It's very difficult for Bedouin because they have many children so every hour of university study is 50-70 dinars (Jordanian JD) which is about 250 shekels, about \$75 per hour. So it is very difficult for Bedouin to go to University. Eid went to university by the way, he studied for four years in Birzeit but he worked his own way through so he didn't have holidays when he went to university and during the day he would be working, laboring in the afternoons and evenings. So if we have someone who finishes university, many are studying abroad, so if somebody finishes his studies abroad in Germany or America he comes back here and there is no work for him so then people are going back to where they studied to live there and stay there. It's a big problem. Instead of helping the Bedouin here he leaves and goes somewhere else. He has two cousins who are living in Germany as doctors and another one in America in Washington. That's as far as study is concerned.

And then let's talk about health issues. There is no clinic nearby for Bedouin at all. If you need to go to hospital you need to go down to Jericho in the Jordan valley or up to Ramallah or to Augusta Victoria but now there's no entry permits to Jerusalem so they can't go to all the hospitals. Seven major hospitals in Jerusalem, eye hospital, dialysis, and all of these chemotherapy no longer accessible. So if an emergency happens and you need an ambulance urgently here, all of these settlements they have their own private ambulance standing by and their own doctors and clinics. If you phone they'll come here immediately, it will take five minutes to get here, but the first thing he'll ask "I need the ID documents of the person." He sees that you got a Palestinian ID, leaves you on the ground, and says "I don't deal with this, I don't treat them." I know according to the law, the Hippocratic oath of all doctors everywhere in the world he's sworn, either on the Bible or the Koran, to help every single person who needs medical help, it doesn't matter what religion, nor where he's from. I don't know if a doctor comes here and he sees somebody on the ground and he leaves him, does he have a heart? And then on the other hand if you phoned the Palestinian authority to their ambulance department they'll say this is Area C it's under Israeli control we need a permit and that's a big problem for the Bedouin.

Those are the problems.

He's saying the civil administration, the senior officer for this whole area is someone called Dangot and he came here a few months ago, he promised me that he wouldn't demolish the school and he also said he'd open the road where you came in. We've got 85 children and also the teachers everyday cross that road and everybody living here has to cross as you crossed climbing over those barriers. On the other side he would make a plan, a town plan for a proper village with water and electricity and everything and since that day, it was in February, ever since then nothing's changed, you've seen the situation. He's called Eitan Dangot (http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/about/staff/Eitan_Dangot.htm)

He's head of the civil administration for this whole region and the civil administration is the wing of the army that deals with the civilian population under occupation and when they came and closed off the road I said to one of the soldiers, "You have a responsibility for these people!" and what was his response? He said to me, "Ah, remind me which state is it that we're occupying?" I don't think he came here of his own accord, I think he was forced to come here because of the pressure he is under from the United Nations, and all of the different embassies, and diplomats we've been bringing here. And when he told me these three things, all of the journalists came to me and said from those statements they said "see look, they're helping you, oh!" and they haven't done anything. What can you take from the air? I've only heard words.

Ibrahim has a damaged hand from, he lost a finger from an explosion and also and he's got shrapnel inside bits of metal in there, he was nine when it happened, they scared him, they said that your hand will have to be amputated so he didn't go to hospital. He was too scared to go.

Anybody got any questions?

Q: What about work?

We've been forbidden to work since 2009. When we built the school in 2009 it became illegal for any Bedouin to work in this whole area. And also the Palestinian Authority doesn't give Bedouin work.

Q: I would just like to tell him that, as an American, I am so ashamed.

Angela: I explained to him.

Eid: The question is, you are ashamed and you see a difficult situation for people sometimes when you are on the road on the highway and you see an accident and you don't know the people but you get out of your car and you help. Don't stay in your car and just have sympathy for the people. Not from you specifically but he does call for help from the outside world, to help as much as you can. If we go back fifteen years in South Africa it was worse but because all of the world together held hands to change it - everything changed.

And here also if we all work together, hand in hand, we can do something.

[Another Bedouin speaks up, the one with the injured hand:] Not about work but the most important thing is the water. And I was in touch with one journalist and she said not to go to others because of an exclusive so Amira Hass will be writing about all of this in Haaretz, they're using photos that UNRWA took.

Angela: He's saying I need to get some photos from him of the damage so I can put it on the website.

In Haaretz Newspaper, which is only read by 11% of Israelis but on the internet I think it has a good readership worldwide. They're going down the tubes, the only way they make money is because, you remember what I said to you on the bus, Israel HaYom, the right wing newspaper that's given away free that Sheldon Adelson funds? Haaretz prints it, it's printed on their printing press and that's what's keeping Haaretz alive.

Q: Tell me more about the Israeli press, what about the Jerusalem post and other things?

Angela: The Jerusalem Post was left wing and it was the only English publication in the '80s. During the first Lebanon war it was seen to be so left wing, so critical of the war, that there was a campaign to get it right wing because they said it was helping Arafat, that is was actually playing into the hands of the enemy. So there was something called "the revolution" and seventeen members of staff left on one single day, they were laid off, and it went very right wing and it's very right wing still. I mean every once in a while there's a good article in it and there are some good journalists. And he [Eid] says what about the Washington Post? The Guardian has been here, the Spiegel has been here so we have to bring the New York Times and I'm in touch with a new woman who has just started. He said I don't need the American newspapers, I don't need just the newspapers, I need also the people. In Europe he has the newspapers but also the European people coming and a lot of diplomats.

Now you see the American diplomats haven't been here. I tried to bring the political officer responsible for settlements and their own security wouldn't allow her to be here and it was really weird, she had to cancel the first time, second time at the last minute, second time they said yes they could come here but then when they were checking the route and said they were going to Ma'al Adumim first they said not to Ma'al Adumim not to anywhere and she was really furious because she said "the security is preventing me from doing my job."

[wind]

For example there was a political officer a few years ago who was a Marine in Iraq at one point so he came here after he served in Iraq and it was nothing for him. So I took him somewhere in Jerusalem, we got lost we were in the West Bank, he wasn't worried, the driver wasn't worried.

[Eid yells something]

He says his daughters are driving him crazy.

Q: How many daughters does he have?

eh, three, three yes these two little ones and you saw Sabrine who is the taller nineteen year old. This little one, the smallest here, she went to school aged five instead of six, because she was driving him crazy because she wanted to go to the school as well and she was too young so they did a special exam for her in Ramallah and she passed it so . .

Q: How many people live here and how many Bedouin in all in the region?

Here twenty two families, about 160 people. But in this whole two kilometer area, 257 families and all of them are sending their children to the school [the one under threat]. And the elder children are still going to Jericho, his son Mohammad, he's 13, he goes to Jericho. But the problem is that the girls, once they've finished at the school here then they're not going on for any high school, this is elementary.

Q: Why?

Because it is what he was saying earlier, first problem, it takes a long time for them waiting by the side of the road for a transport. Sometimes they wait and they come back because they don't get any

transport to get to school in time. Angela: He was answering generally and I said, no what about girls. And he said with girls it's difficult. His son, he can walk by foot, he can get there, 22 kilometers but for a girl it's hard. His son comes out, the 13 year old, and goes to Jericho and they come out of school at 12:30 and it is 5 o'clock when he comes home.

Q: Were these families always here or were they displaced from somewhere else?

Ah, historia, it's a good question. First of all the Bedouin are from Beersheba (Be'er Sheva) area in the Negev in the south. From the Negev, the Bedouin, we were not made refugees in 1948, we were made refugees in 1951. Why not like all the Palestinians in the Nakba in 1948? Because the Israeli authorities asked every Mukhtar or Sheik in the Negev to sign all of their men into the army. And many Bedouin signed off on their children to serve in the army. And for this reason you see many Bedouin on the checkpoints, for example, and in the army and they are volunteering. But our Mukhtar he didn't want to, from 1948 to '51 with all this talk going on about it and exactly in April 1951 they came from the army, they killed five men, burned down 15 tents and confiscated many herds of animals and this happened to the Jahalin tribe. In those days this was under Jordanian rule so first of all they fled from the Negev to the Hebron area, that was where the border was. And UNRWA came and was the first to help them with food supplies, flour and so forth. And the Jordanian authorities said, "Stay there, we will get you back in a few days," and then it became weeks and months and to this day we haven't been able to get back. And since then people have spread out here and further up and in the Jordan valley and all these places. And why did we come specifically here? Bedouin look for two things: open space for shepherds to take the animals and also water. And on the outside of this settlement is Wadi Qelt with it's very very rich water supply. And also we're close to the road so it was able for us [sic] to take all of the products to market. And here there was nobody to disturb. If you are a Bedouin you don't go near the villages because maybe the goats would eat the vegetables.

Q: So there are other Bedouin, ok, what happened to the ones in '51 who volunteered for the Israeli army?

They were made citizens, number one and they stayed on their land in the Negev but they are ranked number three on the scale of Israelis. They're not considered full citizens. So there is lots of discrimination. They vote, half of them don't because they are in what's called "unrecognized villages" on their own land. Many were moved off their land and concentrated. Some were forced into recognized townships and there they had to give up their animals or they're on the unrecognized villages with their animals but they don't have registered addresses so they can't vote. And now there is something called the "Prower plan" which is going to move 30,000 Bedouin out of those unrecognized villages into the recognized townships they will have to give up their animals and traditional lifestyle, it's not where they want to be, they regard those places as living graves and there are threats of an uprising.

Angela: and frankly I wouldn't be surprised because they have been extremely patient, very non-aggressive, non-violent and they've had all of their land taken and stolen and Israel isn't recognizing their land rights.

Q: So there are still Bedouin in the Negev?

Yes, about 180 thousand Negev in the Bedouin, I mean Bedouin in the Negev discussion about which

group of Bedouin is which . . .

Q: The reason I need to know is because I have a big argument with an Israeli man in Houston Texas about this.

Ok, the ones who left left because they were forced at gunpoint to flee because their Mukhtars refused to sign the men into the army. So those who stayed did so compromising, they would serve in the army and today they volunteer in the army but the condition was they could stay in the Negev either on their own land or where they were moved to. So they lost a lot but they weren't made refugees and many are in Gaza as refugees, in Jordan.

There is a village in the Negev called al-Araqib, they're on their own land. They've demolished over 40 times that village and they are trying to say that they are squatting on state land and if you go there you see there is an ancient cemetery, these people have been there for generations. We could get into a whole thing here but for example in the early days of the nineteenth century pilgrims coming to this region came from Europe and they thought of a village or a town as a place with roofs, houses, so they saw tents but there wasn't a real community so they said that there was no one there. There was!

He said if you have time, go to Nazareth and look at the difference between Upper Nazareth (Nazareth Illit) and Nazareth and see the huge difference between a Jewish town and a Palestinian one next door, who gets what funding? And it's absolutely true. And also Beersheba, and Jaffa, and Akko.

Another Bedouin: He said I was also in Nazareth and I saw it myself and garbage up to here.

I promised to show you guys the maps and we have to do that, do you have any more questions?

[later . . .]

Up there on the hill to the right, and Bethlehem is 10 minutes away from Jerusalem by car, but the Muslim and Christian Palestinians from Bethlehem can't get in to either the Church of the Holy Sepulcher or the Al Aqsa Mosque. And Christians from all over the world are coming and also Muslims from all over the world but Palestinians, either Muslim or Christian, 15 minutes away from Jerusalem can't access their holy sites.

Angela: And the reverse, I happen to be a Christian Israeli, because my mother was Christian and my father Jewish so I'm allowed to be an Israeli but I'm not allowed to go to Bethlehem to my holy site [because of Israeli laws.] I went with him, I went the back way just to see the lights .

Ok, let's go and see the school . . .

Links:

Nowhere Left to Go: Arab al-Jahalin Bedouin Ethnic Displacement
<http://www.icahd.org/?p=7825>

<http://mondoweiss.net/2012/05/nowhere-to-go-jahalin-bedouin-homes-slated-for-destruction-outside-jerusalem.html>

An Interview with Angela Godfrey-Goldstein, ICAHD
<http://www.jai-pal.org/content.php?page=90>

<http://electronicintifada.net/people/angela-godfrey-goldstein>

http://www.palestine-primer.com/Palestine_Primer/Bedouin.html

Danny Tirza mentioned:

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/separation-fence-planner-wants-to-reroute-for-jewish-neighborhood-1.287360>

al-Araqib

<http://electronicintifada.net/content/i-want-live-state-thats-not-racist-bedouin-keeps-fighting-his-peoples-rights/11319>