

## **Welcome to Palestine. Chronicles of a Season in Ramallah**

### Chapter Outline

#### **October 2003**

##### Chapter 1

Life in Ramallah seems quiet and, for the fortunate few, rather enjoyable. Palestinians are very hospitable. But checkpoints and the Israeli army's night raids are topics of every conversation.

##### Chapter 2

After a suicide attack in Haifa, Israel accuses Arafat and threatens reprisal. The Israeli pacifist, Uri Avnery, comes to his defence at the Muqataa. A strangely relaxed atmosphere of siege at the Palestinian HQ.

##### Chapter 3

Encounters with some Ramallah residents: a secular Muslim film maker, a bigoted Christian lady, a Marxist feminist. Wearing the Islamic headscarf. A visit to the Shu'fat refugee camp and the social services reserved for women.

##### Chapter 4

Palestinians disapprove of the latest suicide attack, but pity the young woman lawyer who killed herself out of despair. More encounters with members of the cultured elite, all opponents of the Oslo Accords. A curfew is imposed. Women discuss their personal lives.

##### Chapter 5

A difficult journey to Nablus, a city under siege. The Israeli Army and settlers control the roads and the countryside. Harvesting olives with Israeli pacifists in support of Palestinian farmers who are threatened with expulsion.

#### **November 2003**

##### Chapter 6

Everyday life under the occupation. Georgette, a Christian neighbour, tells the story of her family since the exodus in 1948. Though a moderate, she refuses to bend to the Israelis. Thoughts about NGOs and their activities. Demonstrations against the wall in Tel Aviv and Ramallah.

## Chapter 7

Thoughts about the failure of the peace process and the refugee question. A secular philosopher attempts to make sense of suicide attacks. A young Muslim neighbour rejects such violence and aspires to live in peace with Israelis.

## Chapter 8

Ramadan and preparations for Eid. Islam and national identity. The headlines of the world press announce the Geneva Understandings. Cool, hostile reception in Palestine. The Dean of the Law Faculty offers his analysis of the text of the Understandings.

## **December 2003**

### Chapter 9

Collective trauma following a military operation in the city centre of Ramallah: four dead and twenty flats destroyed. Journey to Tulkarem, a city enclosed by the wall. The author talks with Israeli soldiers from Russia and the United States. Contrasts between the two sides of the wall.

### Chapter 10

Demonstrations against the wall in the suburbs of Jerusalem. Conversation with two members of the Christian cultural elite: great bitterness, dogged determination to defend one's historical rights. The writer-diplomat Illan Halevi does his best to remain positive. Israeli and Palestinian university professors meet to share their thoughts on the Geneva Understandings and the boycott.

### Chapter 11

Journey to Hebron. The presence of religious settlers and soldiers in the city centre create an atmosphere of terror. Encounter with a group of students who argue the case of the suicide operations. An anti-conformist professor.

### Chapter 12

Nablus under siege. The army violently occupies the city for two full weeks. Access is difficult. Encounter with young Western activists who support the Palestinian resistance. Breakfast on New Year's morning with a Palestinian family divided over the question of violence.

## **January 2004**

### **Chapter 13**

Failed attempt to visit Gaza through the Erez checkpoint. Journey to Qalqiliya, a community fully surrounded by the wall. Asphyxiation. Visit to the Jenin refugee camp which lies in ruins. Encounters with the residents. Hospitality and human warmth despite the ordeal.

### **Chapter 14**

The author pays a visit to her grandmother's grave in a Jewish cemetery in Jerusalem. The wall has grown rapidly over the past four months. Encounter in Nablus with the family of a political prisoner. In Ramallah, a moderate neighbour is arrested for harbouring a hunted activist. Farewell.

## **Afterword December 2005**

Ramallah is now completely cut off from Jerusalem. Jewish settlements are growing at a brisk pace. Fatah, discredited and divided, is racing towards its collapse, whilst Hamas takes up a place in "normal" political life. Arafat and Sharon have left the stage; Israel has evacuated Gaza; but peace seems more than ever an impossible dream.

## **Possible Additional Contribution March 2008**