

Bloody Hell

A report from Ramallah from an American nurse & humanitarian aid worker



Tuesday April 2

Bloody hell. Just got out of Ramallah yesterday, managed to catch a ride to the checkpoint with the Associated Press in their bullet-proof vehicle, then walked across with a few bullet-proof vested/helmeted journalists, me in my scrubs do not know how to describe what is happening in Ramallah, but I will try. I must I am here (Gaza, Bethlehem, Ramallah, then Lebanon) for 6 weeks, working as a volunteer for the PCRf (Palestine Children's Relief Fund—a non-profit, non-political, humanitarian relief organization). Teaching NRP/NICU stuff, bringing donated supplies, and consulting for potential future relief efforts. I had been in Ramallah since the 23rd March. On 28th, the situation appeared to get worse, with 150 tanks surrounding Ramallah and closures put into effects I had been staying at the hospital since Thursday—it was safer and I was useful there; not really teaching much anymore but instead working ER, OR, NICU, or wherever needed an extra nurse. The staff that could make it in was working back to back shifts, walking past tanks to get to and from work or sleeping at the hospital. Everybody not anaemic donated blood. All supplies are running low, sometimes there was not enough food. The ambulances are prevented from transporting the wounded, or any other patients or staff—they were stopped and arrested, and the ambulances were then used by the Israelis in house to house searches and executions. The patients that were able to make it to the hospital in time were gun shot wounds—mostly to abd. and chest, or head. I saw many corpses with close range wounds/execution style. The morgue is over-full. The Israelis are lying about what is happening—i.e. they did enter Ramallah hospital on Sunday, I was there. The press is censored [sic]—unable to report what is occurring as they are also prevented/detained, threatened, injured, or escorted out. I am hearing that the news in the States is very pro-Israeli as usual. How is this allowed? There are many major human rights issues here.

I feel helpless to do anything. I wish now that I would have stayed in Ramallah. I am a nurse, and a human being. It was very hard to leave, but the hospital staff advised me to go, to get out when I could. They were very afraid about what might happen (and now is happening). I am safe in Jerusalem now, but feel useless-unable to do anything except write emails. And today the situation there is so much worse—the press just told me that now snipers are firing at anyone leaving the Ramallah hospital. In Bethlehem today the

Israelis are targeting churches, have shot and killed a priest and also shot a nun—and the situation is the same for the hospital there, no one allowed in or out. They continue to surround Arafat's compound, cutting off water, food, electricity, and any contact. They shot Palestinians trying to surrender, in their underwear. They continue to conduct house to house searches and executions, they are casting a wide net and arresting many, many people—I saw trucks filled with blindfolded Palestinians pass by the hospital. There were major bombings done early this morning, many people must be hurt or dead. I can't think of anything else to say right now—the situation is unimaginable. I have no words for this except to plea; "please help stop this". Americans need to know what is happening, they need to pay attention. They need to be aware that their news is very biased; they need to search for the truth, and the causes of symptoms such as suicide bombers. They need to re-evaluate their definition of terrorism and who the terrorists are, to include politics that would oppress another people so hard and for so long. All need to take responsibility for our own government's actions and inactions. Please, at least, pray for all the people here—esp. in Ramallah and Bethlehem... am very tired. I'll try to email more later.

Wed. April 3

Here's an update: spoke with the director of the Ramallah hospital—they are running out of medicines, supplies, and oxygen. There are still many casualties and dead in the streets that they are unable to get to. They are worried about diseases that come with having a morgue full again, and garbage in the streets piled high, and unable to get to or bury the dead. They were able to bury 29 bodies yesterday in a mass grave, during a lift of the curfew for a few hours—but soldiers still shot at people in the streets even during this time, killing a 10 yr old boy. There is no electricity, no food and now no water at the hospital. A female doctor was killed in Jenin. In Bethlehem yesterday, they targeted churches—shot and killed a priest, and injured six nuns. They are now shooting at priests that have come to the check point to try to get in to Bethlehem. The hospital and ambulances there are also unable to get to the injured. The press just arrived back to the hotel, telling me that the convoy of supplies trying to get into Ramallah will not be let in.

Some of the babies in the NICU will die without oxygen—of all the indisputable innocents.

Thurs. April 4

I don't even know where to start anymore—except to say that the situation is even worse. There are hundreds of calls to the ambulances at Ramallah every day, pleading for help for the critically sick and injured—but they still are not allowed to do anything or transport anyone. I spoke with a Finnish researcher who was allowed out of Ramallah yesterday who says that there are medical persons detained, along with hundreds of Palestinians. She said that there are hundreds of injured in the bombed areas of Ramallah that are unable to get help. As for Bethlehem, I spoke with press who had been able to get part way in yesterday before being chased out by soldiers, reporting that "every door has been blow open, riddled with bullets", dead bodies behind the doors, a missile in a child's bedroom, "water pipes everywhere are totally destroyed". "This is the most horrible vandalism imaginable—clearly just for punishment" of the Palestinian people. The Israeli soldiers abide by no rule—shooting anyone now. They have expanded the militarized zones, and are not allowing journalists, or anyone in. They do not want anyone seeing what they are doing—this is the most frightening. Peaceful demonstrations at the check points are targeted with tear gas, international convoys of supplies are not allowed in. The situation at the hospitals remains critical—their supplies, medicines, and oxygen are running out. The Ramallah hospital was able to get three oxygen cylinders two days ago, but convoys of medical supplies and food were not allowed in at all yesterday. There is not enough food, either at the hospital or for the rest of Ramallah. There is still no water or electricity—I can not imagine how the medical staff is coping, the nurses in the neonatal unit must be taking turns ventilating the babies by hand with whatever oxygen they have left. How long can the rest of the world watch this, doing nothing?

PLEASE AT LEAST LET THE FOOD, WATER AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES IN!

The Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People 64 Star Street, P.O. Box 24
<http://www.rapprochement.org>

The centre is a non-profit making NGO, started in 1988 during the first Intifada. PCR runs community service programs, youth empowerment and training programs. PCR is also very much involved in the non-violent resistance against the Israeli Occupation to Palestine.