

At-Tuwani Reflection: A Good Thing: Festival of Nonviolent Resistance
By CPT at-Tuwani
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The 3rd Annual At-Tuwani Festival of Nonviolent Resistance took place on Saturday, 7 August. That's a good thing. The festival was a celebration. A celebration of the successful completion of the 9th annual summer camp, a celebration of the forthcoming availability to electricity and water for the village, and a celebration of the general success of defeating ethnic cleansing as the people of the South Hebron Hills have remained on their land for yet another year.

Representatives from nearly all of the villages in the South Hebron Hills were present and were recognized for their continued presence in the area and their ongoing resistance to occupation forces and policies. Certain individuals were also recognized for their exceptional courage and perseverance in the face of settler violence. Several hajjis (a respectful name given to older women) in their 70s and 80s were recognized for their lifelong support of their families and their sweat and tears which have nourished this arid land for decades. Others were recognized for the physical signs of settler violence and racist hatred that their bodies bear, but all who came forward undoubtedly carried emotional scars and painful memories that are both invisible, yet unmistakably present.

Various NGOs and individuals who have been involved in At-Tuwani and the South Hebron Hills were recognized. The awards and recognition went on for quite some time which showed the level of support that these communities have in Israeli, Palestinian and international networks. The number of people involved in the South Hebron Hills also demonstrates the level of support that is needed for the South Hebron Hills to not be wiped off the map through a slow process of ethnic cleansing which seeks an entirely Judaized Judean desert.

But despite all of these recognitions and formalities, the children were in the limelight and were the highlight of this festival. Children from the area performed skits and informally entertained by running around with balloons while being generally cute. The At-Tuwani dance troupe performed a couple of short dabke routines (a traditional form of Arabic dance). A group of clowns from Italy, who had been in At-Tuwani as part of the summer camp also assisted with skits and entertainment.

The 3rd Annual At-Tuwani Festival of Nonviolent Resistance was a good thing. People didn't have to send lookouts up on the hillside to watch for approaching soldiers or settlers, people didn't have to worry about the months they might serve in jail if arrested, people didn't have to call CPT to come videotape their cisterns or fields of wheat that soldiers or settlers demolished. Rather, people attended a festival where their lives, traditions, and courage were celebrated and where their kids smiled.

That's what a good thing is.