

Issa Souf (2018)



Issa Souf is a Palestinian who hosted and helped coordinate joint Israeli and Palestinian non-violent protest activities in the village of Hares and the surrounding area of Salfit. With others, he founded the International Solidarity Movement, an organisation that encourages non-violent activists to come to the West Bank and to be witnesses to the realities of the occupation.

In May 2001, Issa was shot by two Israeli soldiers. He survived but is now a paraplegic. On the third anniversary of being wounded he wrote an open letter to the soldiers who had wounded him. Part of it reads:

"I rushed out of the house to distance the village children from the danger of the tear gas. They were used to playing their simple games on the dusty streets of the village while the pregnant women watched over them and chatted. I didn't believe that your weapons contained live bullets or dum-dum bullets which are prohibited under international law. I was able to protect the children and get them away from your fire, and I don't regret that.

I pity you for having become murderers. Since I was a boy, I have hated killing, hated weapons and hated the colour red, just as I hate injustice and fight against it. That is how I have understood life since I was a boy and that in the same spirit, is what I have taught others. I gave all my strength for the sake of peace and justice and for reducing the suffering that is caused by injustice, whatever its origin.

Yes I pitied you because you are sick. Sick with hate and loathing; sick with causing injustice, sick with egoism, with the death of the conscience and the allure of power. Recovery and rehabilitation from these illnesses, just as from paralysis, is very long but possible...

My resolve to continue living is also a desire to reach others with my message to understand that life is a gift that should not be tampered with, and that all people are equal on this earth, and that power should exist to protect justice and defend it and not to create oppression or to dominate other weaker people".

Since his injury he has supervised summer camps for children under the banner of 'Love for life' where the children are instructed in the arts, contemplation techniques and non-violence. He writes articles for various websites and continues to maintain relations with activists of the international solidarity movement and with Israelis who believe in Palestinian rights to their land.

Issa's Wilson/Hinkes Peace Award was made to recognise his continuing work, especially with children, and his uncompromising commitment to nonviolence.