

## **Living stones and dead children: Palestine and the politics of tourism**

The politics of tourism has been studied in the tourism discipline for a number of decades. While it is widely acknowledged that tourism deteriorates in the face of hostile and violent political events (riots, coups, crime, terrorism and war), it is also evident that tourism is used as a tool in a variety of political struggles. This paper explores the understandings of the politics of tourism that can be derived from the experiences of Palestine.

Since the war of 1948, Palestinians have struggled to overturn a situation of dispossession, marginalisation and exile which ensued from the creation of the state of Israel. Tourism has come to play a surprising role in the political struggle of Palestinians. This paper explores two contrasting cases in order to investigate how tourism is used as a tool to achieve political ends. Firstly, the Alternative Tourism Group of Palestine has worked to alert Christian pilgrims about the social, political and religious realities of the 'Holy Land' through a code of conduct in an effort to counterbalance the interpretation provided by an Israeli-dominated tourist trade. This can be usefully contrasted with a small niche of solidarity tourists joining the International Solidarity Movement, which provides an example of volunteer tourism for justice. These contrasting examples demonstrate the range of activities Palestinians and their supporters are taking to harness tourism for the political agenda of securing justice and peace for the Palestinian people.

However, another perspective has been added to this academic analysis as a result of the recent Israeli invasion of Gaza and the reality of hundreds of dead Palestinian civilians, many of them children. This paper will therefore move away from the analysis of tourism as a political tool to a wider focus on tourism within a context of human rights and justice. It argues that the parameters of the politics of tourism must be expanded beyond viewing tourism as a casualty of conflict or a tool to achieve political ends; it should be viewed as essentially a justice issue, with truly sustainable tourism attainable only when equity and justice prevail in the 'host' community and beyond.

Freya Higgins-Desbiolles

School of Management

University of South Australia

GPO Box 2471, Adelaide, SA 5001

Tel: +61 8 8302 0878/ Fax: +61 8 8302 0512

email: [Freya.HigginsDesbiolles@unisa.edu.au](mailto:Freya.HigginsDesbiolles@unisa.edu.au)

## **Living stones and dead children: Palestine and the politics of tourism**

You Westerners have been coming to the Holy Land for centuries to visit the shrines, the dead stones. But you do not see the living stones – the human beings who live and struggle before your eyes. I say ‘Wake up!’ What matters are the living stones! (Father Elias Chacour, cited in Bush, 1996)

### **Introduction**

The politics of tourism has been acknowledged as an important topic of study since Linda Richter made her original foray into the field with a case study on the politics of tourism in the Philippines (1980). Today, as globalisation, terrorism and insecurity have come to the fore, the politics of tourism is due for renewed attention.

Most frequently, analysts of the politics of tourism have focused on tourism as a casualty of conflict, terrorism and crime. There are numerous works of this type, including: Pizam and Mansfeld’s (1996) edited volume on *Tourism, Crime and International Security Issues*; the special edition of the *Journal of Travel Research* on ‘War, Terrorism, Tourism: Times of Crisis and Recovery’ (Pizam and Tarlow, 1999); and more recently the analysis of how negotiations in the Middle East peace process impact on the tourism industries of the region (Ladki *et al.*, 2002).

Additionally, tourism can be used as a tool in a larger political strategy or, modifying the words of the war strategist Carl von Clausewitz, ‘tourism is the continuation of politics by other means’. Mowforth and Munt argued that tourism can be viewed ‘as politics’ and offered the example of the efforts of Cuba, Jamaica and Grenada in the early 1980s to overturn the imperialistic and even racist nature of conventional tourism in the Caribbean and inaugurate a ‘new tourism’ that would involve all people and would lead to equitable development (Mowforth and Munt, 2003, pp. 258–60).

This use of tourism as politics is also described by Cohen-Hattab (2004), who recounts how the Zionists and the Arab populations of Palestine vied for the upper hand in using tourism for the political purpose of asserting their national goals during the British Mandate period between 1922 and 1948. At the beginning of this era, the Arabic population dominated the nascent tourism industry, but the Zionists tried to wrest it from their control in order to use it 'to promote the Jewish national endeavour and influence world opinion in their favor' (Cohen-Hattab, 2004, p. 78). As Cohen-Hattab (2004) noted, this process did not cease after the creation of the state of Israel due to the perpetual state of conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians that followed. This alerts us to the fact that Palestine/Israel is a valuable site at which to study the politics of tourism and tourism as politics.

### **Tourism in Palestine: hostage to the political conflict**

As the 'cradle of civilisation' and a place of significance to the three great monotheistic religions, Palestine can claim a long historical engagement with travellers, tourists and pilgrims. However, modern tourism to Palestine is shaped by the political context of the Israel–Palestinian conflict that has existed since 1948 when the state of Israel was declared. Despite the negative environment that this presents for the development of tourism, Palestinians have placed great importance on tourism for the development of their economy. As Palestinian tourism authority Abu Dayyah said, 'tourism is going to be the locomotive that will carry the rest of the economy forward' (cited in Stein, 1995, p. 18).

Since 1967, when Israel took all of Jerusalem and occupied the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian entry into the tourism market was quashed by a number of measures which Stein has depicted as 'forced underdevelopment' (1995, p. 17). Such measures included: a refusal to train and license Palestinian tour guides, the imposition of crippling municipal taxes and a refusal to license hotel renovations or new developments in Palestinian areas (Stein, 1995, p. 17). According to Bush, 'control of access to airports and highways has for 28 years given Israel the power to discourage

Palestinians from trying to enter this lucrative market' (1996). As a result, 'Israel maintained a virtual monopoly over the tourism industry, exploiting Palestinian resources and heritage while excluding Palestinians from tourism's economic, political, and human benefits' (Kassis, 2006). The majority of tourists who travelled to Palestine went on tours with government-licensed Israeli tour guides, visiting a few set holy sites such as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem for only a few hours. Some of these tourists may not have even realised that they had left Israel 'because Palestinian cities and villages – and even the West Bank and Gaza – were not shown on Israeli tourist maps' (Kassis, 2006). Kassis argued that tourism is used as a political tool to tell a Zionist narrative that erases indigenous Palestinian history and renders the people invisible: 'tourism in Israel became a vehicle for historical myth and the continuation of the occupation' (Kassis, 2006). Coupled with the political propaganda painting Palestinians at worst as potential terrorists and at best as dishonest and dirty (Kassis, 2006), the Palestinians had little leverage to attract tourists off the Israeli-controlled itineraries and to represent themselves to tourists.

However, there was one brief period when tourism prospered in Palestine. After the initiation of the Oslo peace process in 1993 when the Palestinian Authority and its Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities were established, the Palestinian tourism industry flourished. As Kassis reported:

Before the outbreak of the second, or al-Aqsa Intifada in September of 2000, the flow of tourists almost doubled to 105,000 per month, hotel capacity rose from 2500 to 6000 rooms, and occupancy rose to 60%. More than a hundred tour operators did business in the country, utilizing 230 modern tour buses and 231 licensed guides. Tourism became one of the critical sectors of the Palestinian economy. It accounted for 7–10% of the country's GNP, and employed 10,000 people. (Kassis, 2006)

Unfortunately, the onset of the second Intifada in 2000 derailed most of this progress. The Arabian Hotel Association (AHA) reported that the hotel sector of Bethlehem (a key tourist site) was almost

bankrupted because of barriers to tourism movement resulting in occupancy rates of only 4 per cent in 2005 and 9 per cent in 2006, threatening some 1000 Palestinian jobs (Alcantara, 2006, p. 14).

Additionally, in the effort to create a viable Palestinian state, promotion of tourism is not a top priority for scarce resources under current circumstances. There is currently no Tourist Information Office nor a Tourism Board; the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities is currently relying on the efforts of the private sector to market Palestine (Deputy Minister of Tourism Marwan al-Toubasi, pers. comm., 14 November 2007). The ability to foster conventional tourism in these circumstances is limited.

Because of the long duration of the conflict, Israel/Palestine is the site of an unusual phenomenon described by some as ‘politically oriented’ tourism (Clark, 2000; Brin, 2006). Brin’s analysis offers a typology of this tourism market segment which differentiates ‘solidarity/activism tourists’ from merely ‘intrigued tourists’. The former describes those engaging in tourism to express solidarity with one side or the other in the conflict, while the latter describes those who use tourism to satisfy curiosity about the site of such a significant conflict but are not particularly supportive of either side (Brin, 2006). Brin argues that, while there are other sites around the world that attract such politically oriented tourists (e.g. the Koreas, Northern Ireland and Berlin), Israel/Palestine, and particularly Jerusalem, are different because of the unusual strength of the emotional attachment they inspire (Brin, 2006, p. 238). Brin’s attempt to remain academically neutral leads him to the view that Israeli and Palestinian authorities and organisations will continue to use such tourism opportunities to ‘propagate their political agendas’ (2006, p. 238). Clark argues that this political tourism is an indoctrination through practice, allowing tourists to place themselves in the ‘reality’ of the visited community, whether Israeli or Palestinian (2000, p. 18). These analyses (Brin and Clark) judge politically oriented tourism as a type of propaganda. This paper, employing a new conceptualisation of justice through tourism, finds this explanation insufficient in understanding what is occurring. It therefore offers an analysis of two case studies demonstrating Palestinian efforts to utilise tourism to overturn the dominance of the Israeli narrative and thereby to secure justice for the Palestinian people.

## **Alternative Tourism Group and the Code of Responsible Tourism to Palestine**

The village of Beit Sahour near Bethlehem is significant to the Palestinian resistance. This village was known for its use of nonviolent tax resistance during the first Intifada and it was instrumental in the use of alternative tourism for ‘resistance and understanding’ (Elias Rishmawi, cited in Stein, 1995, p. 18). In support of the latter effort, the Alternative Tourism Group (ATG) was established in 1995. It is a Palestinian NGO specialising in tours and pilgrimages to Palestine which offers opportunities to engage with the lived experiences of Palestinians. ATG offers ‘justice tourism’ experiences, which it describes as ‘tourism that holds as its central goals the creation of economic opportunities for the local community, positive cultural exchange between host and guest through one-on-one interaction, the protection of the environment and political/historical education’ (ATG, no date a). In addition to this focus on the tourist and their experiences, ATG additionally encourages Palestinian tourism operators to avoid exploitative practices and to create an industry that benefits the Palestinian people. ATG’s specific objectives include:

- to modify the tendencies of mass tourism in ‘the Holy Land’ to establish a more human-oriented tourism
- to put foreign tourists in direct contact with the Palestinian population in order to help them develop a better understanding of Arab Palestinian culture and history
- to break down the negative stereotypes of Palestine and its people that predominates in the West
- to achieve more balance between the revenues of the Palestinian and Israeli tourism sectors by using Palestinian infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, transportation, guides, etc.)
- to augment the number of tourists visiting Palestine and increase the length of their stay in Palestinian areas
- to develop amongst tourists a knowledge of Palestinian culture and the socio-political situation in Palestine

- to encourage instructive and authentic meetings with the Palestinian people to develop amongst tourists an objective understanding of everyday realities of the Israeli occupation
- to offer tourists the opportunity to share unique experiences with Palestinians through volunteer work with nongovernmental organisations (olive harvesting, tree planting, etc.) (Rami Kassis, pers. comm., 12 March 2009).

Through these methods, the ATG ‘seeks to promote a positive image of Palestine and its people and to contribute towards establishing a just peace in the area’ (ATG no date a).

To contextualise these efforts, it should be recognised that the Christian pilgrimage tourism niche is very significant to Israel because this niche is less affected by outbreaks of violence. Recently, with the downturn in visitors following the attack on Gaza, the Israeli Ministry of Tourism launched a NIS 26 million (USD \$6.4 million) advertising campaign. Shaul Zemach, Director-General of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, stated: ‘We truly value and appreciate the faithfulness our Christian friends have shown us through the years, especially with their many visits to Israel’ (Leichman, 2009).

Recognising the significance of this pilgrimage sector, the ATG focused on the promotion of justice tourism (or engagement with the ‘living stones’) to such faith-based groups and social movements.

Using a two-pronged strategy, the ATG developed tour offerings called ‘Pilgrimages for Transformation’ (PIFT) and led an effort to develop a code of responsible tourism to the Holy Land. The PIFT’s objective is to bring people to the Holy Land on ‘a spiritual journey seeking to be instruments of transformation in the Holy Land; the power to transform individuals and, through them, the religious, social, and political spheres in ways that will help bring to an end the tragic violence and conflict that defines the Middle East’ (ATG, no date b). In the second effort, the ATG helped form the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT) and focused on the development of a ‘code of conduct for tourism in the Holy Land’. This document was drafted following two meetings in 2007. The first meeting held in Bethlehem in October involved key stakeholders in tourism in Palestine, including the ATG, the AHA, the Palestinian Ministry of

Tourism and Antiquities, private operators and civil society organisations; it provided an agenda for a more just tourism in Palestine. These outcomes were fed to the second meeting held in Madaba, Jordan in November 2007 and involving representatives of international organisations focused on responsible tourism and justice and those involved in the pilgrimage tourism sector (Solomon, 2008).<sup>1</sup> The document that resulted from these meetings includes a vision statement from the PIRT, a section with advice for travellers to the Holy Land and a section with advice for those in the Palestinian tourism sector. The vision statement, in addition to commitments to sustainability and fair trading practices, expresses an aim to change travel patterns so that tourists visit Palestinian locations ‘in order to achieve a more equal distribution of tourism revenues to all people in this land’ (PIRT, 2008). The code of conduct alerts the tourists to ways to engage with the Palestinian people and their lived reality and to commit to sharing what they learn from the Palestinians with their home communities on their return. It additionally asks the operators in the Palestinian tourism sector to commit to a set of practices that engages with the tourists in a fair and responsible manner and to consider the impacts they might have on the visitors’ perceptions of Palestine, its people and their reality.<sup>2</sup>

Since 1995, the ATG has hosted more than 20,000 visitors to Palestine, among them 13,000 Christian pilgrims (Rami Kassis, pers. comm., 21 March 2009). The ATG has focused these efforts on the Christian pilgrimage sector in an effort to transform them into advocates for social justice for the Palestinian people. In the continuum of the possible uses of tourism as politics, this is a moderate strategy aimed at changing the ‘hearts and minds’ of pilgrims by exposing them to a silenced

---

<sup>1</sup> The author participated in this meeting.

<sup>2</sup> The code was released in October 2008. The launch occurred at Bethlehem University in November 2008 in the presence of the Minister of Tourism, representatives of the Palestinian tourism industry and the public. After the code’s launch, many local organisations endorsed it. Internationally, many partner organisations, mainly in Europe, have showed interest in promoting the code and worked on translating and publishing it in German. The code is currently being translated into French. Additionally, a website for the PIRT and the code are under development and will be launched shortly ([www.pirt.ps](http://www.pirt.ps)). On this website, organisations and individuals will be able to endorse the code online. As Rami Kassis of ATG states, ‘We hope the website will be also an important tool to promote a responsible tourism to Palestine’ (pers. comm., 21 March 2009).

Palestinian narrative and building a tourism sector that can reap more equitable economic rewards for Palestinians from the pilgrimage sector. However, in the context of an ongoing occupation and a violation of human rights, tourism has been put to more extreme ends in the Palestinian cause. This discussion now turns to a more recent initiative to harness the commitment of solidarity tourists to undertake what could be characterised in the tourism lexicon as volunteer tourism for justice.

### **International Solidarity Movement**

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) is a Palestinian-led movement committed to resisting the Israeli occupation of Palestine through the use of nonviolent, direct-action methods. Founded by a small group of mostly Palestinian activists<sup>3</sup> in August 2001, ISM organises for international solidarity volunteers to visit Palestine and through their presence support and strengthen the Palestinian popular resistance by providing the Palestinian people with international protection and a voice with which the Palestinian narrative on the Israeli occupation can reach the world.

International volunteers are the key to the ISM strategy; according to the ISM, they provide:

1. **Protection:** An international presence at Palestinian civilian actions can ensure a degree of protection for Palestinians engaged in nonviolent resistance.
2. **Message to the mainstream media:** The Palestinian struggle is not accurately reported by the mainstream corporate media ... People from all over the world that join us can reach out to their respective media and help dispel this notion.
3. **Personal witness and transmitting information:** International civilians joining Palestinians can bear witness and return home to talk to their communities about what is happening.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ghassan Andoni was a director of the ATG and one of its co-founders as well as one of the co-founders of ISM. However, Rami Kassis, Executive Director of the ATG, states 'there is no direct relation between the ATG and the ISM'.

4. **Break isolation and provide hope:** The occupation isolates Palestinians and cuts them off from the rest of the world and from each other. International civilians coming in, despite restrictions, send a message to the Palestinian community – ‘we see, we hear and we are with you.’ Hope that people acting together can change things is a cornerstone of our philosophy and message. (ISM, no date)

The ISM is a Palestinian movement that seeks the support of international activists as a strategy to support its resistance to the Israeli occupation. While the international volunteers are integral to the ISM strategy, the ISM makes it clear that Palestinians lead the movement. ‘ISM are not in Palestine to teach nonviolent resistance. Palestinians resist nonviolently every day’ (ISM, no date). ISM volunteers support the Palestinian resistance through:

- **Direct Action** – challenging crippling checkpoints and curfew, confronting tanks and demolition equipment, removing roadblocks, participating in nonviolent demonstrations, accompanying farmers to their fields and protecting families whose homes are threatened with demolition.
- **Emergency Mobilization** - escorting ambulances through checkpoints, delivering food and water to families under curfew or house arrest, assisting the injured or disabled to access medical care and walking children to school.
- **Documentation** - documenting and reporting to local and international media about the daily life under occupation and the countless human rights and international law violations by the Israeli military. (ISM, no date)

In addition to these smaller scale actions, ISM has claimed involvement in two of the biggest confrontations of the second Intifada. ‘In April 2002, with help from Palestinians, international activists were able to outmaneuver the Israeli military during two of its biggest military operations, entering and providing support to those trapped inside the Presidential Compound in Ramallah and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem’ (ISM, no date).

George Rishmawi stated:

Our goal is to help Palestinians do nonviolent resistance because when they do it without international accompaniment they are met with terrible violence. The international presence enabled many families, this October, to go to their fields and harvest their olives, and open roadblocks. When the army sees that they're watched, they are less free-handed in how they treat people.

You are all invited to Palestine. When they see internationals who have come, Palestinians feel hope, that others have come to share their hardship. Hope is very important for a people who feel their pain ignored, their voice unheard, their land taken away every day. (Rishmawi, 2004, p. 7)

That these solidarity volunteers might be critically injured or even killed has been acknowledged at the outset. As co-founder George Rishmawi stated, 'when Palestinians get shot by Israeli soldiers, no one is interested anymore, but if some of these foreign volunteers get shot or even killed, then the international media will sit up and take notice' (cited by Kalman and Castle, 2004).

One of the most well-known ISM activists is Rachel Corrie, because she was a youthful American killed by an Israeli 'Defence' Force bulldozer while trying to prevent it from demolishing a house in Gaza in March 2003. Her diary provides a useful insight into the way ISM activists witness Palestinian experiences and share their insights (Corrie 2006). On 7 February 2003, after just two weeks in Palestine, she wrote:

I still have few words to describe what I see. I don't know if many of the children here have ever existed without tank-shell holes in their walls. I think even the smallest of these children understand that life is not like this everywhere ... Nothing

could have prepared me for the reality of the situation here. You just can't imagine it unless you see it. And even your experience is not at all the reality: what with the difficulties the Israeli army would face if they shot an unarmed US citizen, the fact that I have money to buy water when the army destroys wells, and of course, the fact that I have the option of leaving. I am allowed to see the ocean. (Corrie, 2006, p. 29)

Despite the dangers and hardships, thousands of North American, British, European, expatriate Palestinian and even Israeli activists have volunteered to support Palestinians in their nonviolent resistance through ISM. This must represent one of the most extreme forms of volunteer tourism on the planet and demonstrates the ultimate lengths to which committed people will go to turn their travel and tourism choices towards achieving justice for others in the global community.

These two selected case studies suggest a continuum of strategies in using tourism to effect political change. They are in fact not mutually exclusive and it could be argued that the Palestinians must resort to a variety of such measures in order to ensure their voices are heard. However, with the most recent attack on Gaza, it is clear that our understandings of the politics and indeed ethics of tourism should extend further.

#### **Politics of tourism in the aftermath of the Gaza attack of December 2008<sup>4</sup>**

The 2008 Christmas season was reported as one of the best on record for Bethlehem and Palestinian tourism due to the peace talks that began in 2007. Accommodations reported full occupancy and 250,000 tourists were booked for the week of Christmas (up from 65,000 in 2007) (Tjolle, 2008). The

---

<sup>4</sup> Close attention to the devastating occupation would demonstrate that the most recent attack on Gaza is not an aberration, but rather a part of a continuous Israeli effort to dispossess and demoralise Palestinians (Halper, 2008). The reasons that this particular attack is a focus of this paper include: its recency, the brutal two-year siege that preceded it, and the nature of the attack of nearly a month's duration where people were prevented from fleeing the war zone and schools, universities, civilian homes and UN facilities were targeted.

total number of visitors to Palestine in 2008 was estimated at 1.25 million and marked a peak before the devastating downturn that occurred with the second Intifada (Tjolle, 2008). Just as Bethlehem marked its millionth visitor for 2008 and the Palestinian Tourism Minister prepared for press interviews on the 27 December, Israel attacked Gaza (Heyer, 2008). The pretext was the Hamas termination of a ceasefire and continued rocket attacks on bordering Israeli towns, but the impacts were disproportionate, devastating and constituted possible war crimes.

Professor Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights argued:

In my view, what made the Gaza attacks launched on 27 December different from the main wars fought by Israel over the years was that the weapons and tactics used devastated an essentially defenceless civilian population. The one-sidedness of the encounter was so stark, as signalled by the relative casualties on both sides (more than 100 to 1; 1300-plus Palestinians killed compared with 13 Israelis, and several of these by friendly fire), that most commentators refrained from attaching the label 'war'. (2009)

Ann Veneman, Unicef's executive director, said children were 'paying the price of Gaza war' and 'the crisis in Gaza is singular in that children and their families have nowhere to escape, no refuge. The very thought of being trapped in a closed area is disturbing for adults in peace times' ('Children "paying price of Gaza war"', 2009.)

Tourists and pilgrims continued their travels in the Holy Land, practising their human rights to travel and tourism and to practice their religion, while Gazans were trapped in a war zone of death and destruction.

These recent events challenge the utility of deploying tourism as a political tool because it wields too little power in the political arena at times of the most vital importance. Political theorists and tourism

analysts alike might claim, as a form of low politics, that tourism cannot be expected to achieve the ambitious aims of high politics worthy of the efforts of diplomats and war strategists. However, closer investigation demonstrates that tourism is in fact quite significant to the dynamics of the conflict. Halper (2008, p. 166) discusses how Israeli settlement blocks around Jerusalem are cutting off Palestinian East Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian occupied territories and the impact that will have. He states:

This is significant not only because of its historic, religious, cultural and political importance to them, but also because tourism represents (in potential) the major Palestinian industry. Removing Jerusalem from the Palestinian economy fatally undermines the essential viability of a Palestinian state. (Halper, 2008, p. 166)

In the light of such facts, it is apparent that host communities like the Palestinians cannot be abandoned to their own devices to wield tourism as a political tool, because it proves insufficient to secure the human rights and justice that they require for their survival and well-being. It is clear that the tourism industry must also play its part by re-orienting its *modus operandi* in this era of the global village. Currently, tourism analysts and tourism industry professionals practice a studied indifference in the face of such issues as that of the occupation of Palestine based on the practice of separating commerce and politics, but that is not tenable in an industry that touts itself as the 'world's peace industry' and the foremost purveyor of cross-cultural contact in the global community. It is unacceptable that religious pilgrims and secular tourists can continue to enjoy their travels to the Holy Land and the tourism industry thereby profit (facilitated by the Israeli tourism industry), while nearby Palestinians are being slowly, and not so slowly, strangled in economic, political, social, cultural, environmental and even physical terms. As Halper demonstrates, tourism in the occupied Palestinian territories is used by the Israelis as a tool for occupation and dispossession and external tourism agents that collaborate in this process are complicit in facilitating gross human rights violations and injustice; they are in fact supporting the trading in and profiting from stolen goods, stolen lands and broken lives. Palestine possesses (or should possess) some of the most treasured tourism sites in the

world and attracts significant numbers of pilgrims and tourists, and yet tourism leaders have said little about this situation of ongoing occupation, dispossession and de-humanisation that has been occurring while the pilgrims and tourists are facilitated in their access to Palestinian places. If the tourism industry does not want to stand accused of supporting and profiting from the trade in stolen goods, it will have to face the question of whether ethical action necessitates a new approach grounded in human rights and justice. Possibilities are apparent, including a re-direction of business to Palestinian-owned enterprises and organisations such as the ATG in the occupied Palestinian territories or a joining of the gathering boycott, divestment and economic sanctions campaign targeting Israel's occupation (see Halper, 2008, pp. 289-293). This Palestinian case study suggests that, in this era of growing global interdependency, human rights and justice are no longer marginal to the tourism endeavour but an essential 'license to operate' for the industry.

## **Conclusion**

I can't believe that something like this can happen in the world without a bigger outcry. It hurts me ... to witness how awful we can allow the world to be ... this has to stop. I think it is a good idea for us all to drop everything and devote our lives to making this stop. I don't really think it's an extremist thing to do anymore.  
(Corrie, 2006, p. 49)

As Martin Luther King declared in his 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' in 1963: 'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere'. This is even truer in this era of the global village. Palestine has stood as one of the key sites of conflict for sixty years because of the injustice that has gone unaddressed and the world has paid a dear price for allowing this to continue. The Palestinian people themselves have paid an even higher price and continue to do so. Groups such as the ATG and the ISM have harnessed the capacities of tourism and travel to connect the Palestinian people with the outside world and to overturn this situation of injustice. They demonstrate the ultimate capacities of tourism to serve the cause of justice and human rights.

Drawing the lessons from this Palestinian case study, I suggest that for tourism to be truly sustainable and to thrive, justice is imperative. For justice to prevail, we must have a world where all humans are afforded their human rights based on an acceptance of their common humanity. In the era of the global village, demands for justice and human rights can no longer go unheeded as the web of interdependency ties us one to another. Tourism, if it is indeed the world's 'peace industry' and its foremost purveyor of cross-cultural contact, has a significant role to play in the attainment of justice and recognition of human rights. Palestine represents a ripe opportunity for the tourism industry to take up this challenge and thereby earn its self-appointed title as the world's peace industry.

### **Acknowledgements**

In the interests of transparency, I report that I was a participant in the meetings in Alexandria, Egypt in 2005 and in Madaba, Jordan in 2007 that assisted in the development the Code of Conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land. I would like to thank Rami Kassis for his vision of justice through tourism which has inspired my recent work and thank him for his cooperation with this research project. I also wish to thank Kate Leeson, editor at the Hawke Research Institute, University of South Australia, for her editorial assistance with this paper.

### **References**

- Alcantara, N 2006, 'Israeli wall work destroying Bethlehem's last forest', *Contours*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 13–14.
- Alternative Tourism Group no date a, 'About us', viewed 11 June 2007, from <<http://www.patg.org/index.php?page=1177263078>>.
- Alternative Tourism Group no date b, 'Alternative Tourism Group' brochure, viewed 11 June 2007, from <[http://www.atg.ps/site\\_files/ATG.pdf](http://www.atg.ps/site_files/ATG.pdf)>.
- Brin, E 2006, 'Politically oriented tourism in Jerusalem', *Tourist Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 215–243.

- Bush, T 1996, 'Holy Land pilgrims: in search of living stones', viewed 20 January 2009, from <<http://www.toursinenglish.com/2007/01/holy-land-pilgrims-in-search-of-living.html>>.
- 'Children "paying price of Gaza war"' 2009, Aljazeera.net, viewed 16 January 2009, from <<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/01/20091157268591938.html>>.
- Clark, R 2000, 'Self-presentation in a contested city: Palestinian and Israeli political tourism in Hebron', *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 12–18.
- Cohen-Hattab, K 2004, 'Zionism, tourism and the battle for Palestine: tourism as a political-propaganda tool', *Israel Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 61–85.
- Corrie, R 2006, *My name is Rachel Corrie*, A Rickman & K Vine, eds, Theatre Communications Group, New York.
- Falk, R 2009, 'Calls for investigation into Gaza attacks: Israel's war crimes', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March, viewed 11 March 2009, from <<http://mondediplo.com/2009/03/03warcrimes>>.
- Halper, J 2008, *An Israeli in Palestine: resisting dispossession, redeeming Israel*, Pluto, London.
- Heyer, H 2008, 'Tears for Gaza: children, women and elderly among dead', *E Turbo News*, 28 December.
- International Solidarity Movement no date, 'About ISM', viewed 20 January 2009, from <<http://palsolidarity.org/about>>.
- Kalman, M & Castle, T 2004, 'S.F. Jewish activist held as a security threat in Israel', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 July, viewed 3 March 2009, from <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/07/14/MNGBS7L5V71.DTL>>.
- Kassis, R 2006, 'The Palestinians and justice tourism: another tourism is possible', paper prepared for the Masters of Pilgrimage, Tourism and Cultural Heritage, Bethlehem TEMPUS Programme, viewed 11 June 2007, from <<http://www.atg.ps/index.php?page=1177263149.1199956205>>.
- Ladki, SM, Bassal, Z & Sadik, MW 2002, 'Effect of Middle East peace process on pan Arab tourism industries', *Tourism Analysis*, Vol. 6, pp. 267–272.

- Leichman, AJ 2009, 'Israeli tourism reaching out to U.S. Christians', *Christian Post*, 6 February, viewed 3 March 2009, from < <http://www.dakotavoices.com/2009/02/israeli-tourism-reaching-out-to-us-christians/>>.
- Mowforth, M & Munt, I 2003, *Tourism and sustainability: development and new tourism in the Third World*, 2nd ed, Routledge, London.
- Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism 2008, *A code of conduct for tourism in the Holy Land: a Palestinian initiative*, viewed 23 December 2008 from <<http://www.atg.ps/index.php?page=1178694470.1227348702>>.
- Pizam, A & Mansfeld, Y 1996, *Tourism, crime and international security issues*, Wiley, Chichester, UK.
- Pizam, A & Tarlow, P 1999, 'War, terrorism, tourism: times of crisis and recovery', special edition of the *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 38, No. 1.
- Richter, L 1980, 'The political uses of tourism: a Philippine case study', *Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 14, pp. 237–357.
- Rishmawi, G 2004, 'Helping to bring back hope', in J Sandercock, R Sainath, M McLaughlin, H Khalili, N Blincoe, H Arraf & G Andoni (eds) *Peace under fire: Israel/Palestine and the International Solidarity Movement*, Verso, London, pp. 3–7.
- Soloman, R 2008, *Combating dispossession: towards a code of ethics in Palestine*, Alternative Tourism Group, Beit Sahour.
- Stein, RL 1995, 'Remapping Israeli and Palestinian tourism', *Middle East Report*, Sept–Oct, pp. 16–19.
- Tjolle, V 2008, 'Christmas good to Bethlehem – no room in the inns', *Sustainable Travel e-newsletter*, 30 December, viewed 16 January 2009, from <<http://www.travelmole.com>>.