

*Following is an article written by Art Gish with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in Hebron. The situation in Hebron is not an isolated case, but rather is happening in many towns across the West Bank. Please feel free to forward.*

*“Don’t just pray for peace, pray for a just peace.”*

*Sabeel, Palestine (www.sabeel.org)*

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

## **POPULATION TRANSFER**

*by Art Gish, Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in Hebron*

A common theme in the Israeli media is the controversial idea of “transfer”, a proposed policy of moving Palestinians out of the occupied territories. In other words, ethnic cleansing, solving the problems between Israelis and Palestinians by removing the Palestinians. This idea is especially popular on the Israeli right, and is supported by many people in the current Israeli government.

It is becoming clear that “transfer” is happening now in Hebron. The following facts support this conclusion.

For the past 70 days all the area around the old city has been under curfew, which essentially means 24 hours a day house arrest, except for the occasional few hours when residents can go out and shop.

Over 2500 shops have been closed, some for as long as two years. Practically no Palestinian vehicles are allowed in this area and some areas are closed to Palestinian pedestrians. Most of the people living in the area have left. If one walks through Hebron streets in the evening, there are lights only in a few dwellings.

It is now common for Israeli soldiers to search Palestinian homes in Hebron, often in the middle of the night. One family our team knows recently had their home searched three times in one day. Often these homes are ransacked, personal items are destroyed, and sometimes soldiers urinate or defecate in the homes. We know of families where sexual advances were made toward Palestinian women.

It is very difficult for utility workers to come into this area and do needed repairs, so services are deteriorating. Our team has been asked to accompany these workers so they not be harassed or injured.

Each day our team members monitor children going to school. Often soldiers do not allow children to go to school, or harass, and sometimes beat them. Because of double shifts and frequent school closings, children are falling behind in their studies, causing parents to leave the area for the sake of their children.

Even for the few hours curfew is lifted, most shops are not allowed to open and anyone on the street is subject to frequent detentions, sometimes lasting for an hour or more, so most Palestinians are afraid to enter the area.

The area where the produce market was two years ago is now a settler parking lot. We are afraid that any day now empty shops will be demolished to make more room for the settlers.

Palestinians are not explicitly told they have to leave Hebron, but what seems clear to the human rights community here is that the effect of all these restrictions and abuses is to empty the area

of Palestinians. We must ask the question of whether the Israeli government has started to implement clear, explicit plans for removing all Palestinians from a large area of Hebron.

We are also beginning to see areas outside of Hebron being cleared, and massive recent land confiscations. This fits with the declared statement that this whole area belongs only to Jews

Whether by design or effect, we see now in Hebron a major step in transferring the Palestinian population out of Hebron.

#