

## AL-KHALIL (HEBRON) REFLECTION: A better than usual Friday (8 August 2013)

Written by Jonathan Brenneman  
Tuesday, 13 August 2013 09:07

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CPTnet

12 August 2013

[Note: The following story has been edited for length. The entire reflection may be found in the [new CPT Palestine newsletter](#)

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Fridays have been difficult for CPT recently. While the soldiers have been relatively benign toward the Palestinians on Fridays (which we are thrilled about), they have not been so lax with us. Fridays have mostly consisted of us going on Mosque patrol, getting yelled at by soldiers, and leaving under fear of arrest. A few weeks ago, soldiers told us we couldn't be in the area with our hats and vest. Then they told us we weren't allowed in the area at all. Last Friday, a soldier told us we were not allowed there. Then he asked us why we don't go to Syria, if I think I'm a wise guy, why we insisted on blabbing instead of leaving, if we read our Bible, why we asked so many questions when the command was "obvious," and finally if we would like him to bring out some more soldiers to force us out.

Every Friday evening we do what we call the "prayers' road patrol" along the road that connects the settlement of Kiryat Arba with the Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of Machpelah. Since Palestinians live along the road, Israeli soldiers are always stationed there on Friday evenings to protect settlers. Sometimes Palestinians are denied access to the road or are attacked by settlers.

We must pass in front of the Ibrahimi Mosque (Cave of Machpelah), where soldiers have told us we cannot be, to walk on the road. One soldier greeted us as we walked by and asked about our organization on our way back. When I talked about what CPT stood for, he nodded in agreement. As the conversation turned to the settlements he said, "Yeah, the settlements are a big problem. I hope you all continue doing good work; good luck." We stumbled away, half in shock.

We continued our return journey energized, talking about how refreshing that interaction was, how we need to remember to humanize everyone we meet, and strategies we used to "love all our neighbors" in this situation. We chatted all the way up the walkway to the Ibrahimi Mosque (Cave of Machpelah), when a border policewoman called us over.

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She explained that we are not allowed to wear our vests and hats there. We told her that there was no such law. She courteously translated our inquiry to the Israeli civilian police behind her. The border-police woman continued to say, "Just hold on a second we're fighting about it right now." Eventually she said, "I'm sorry...You can go." Again, we were flabbergasted. We walked through the checkpoint, smiles on our faces, vests on our chests, and hats on our heads. One of the border-police men asked us sternly, "Do you understand?" To which we answered, "Yes! We're allowed," as we hurried through.

I don't know what the soldiers will be like in the future, but that night we had a soldier encourage us in our work, while another actually apologized to us, allowing us to do something we have been denied permission to do for weeks. It was a great walk, and totally redeemed my Friday.