

Stark insight into Palestinian lives

By **ABANO B SAAD**

IMAGINE life in a place where you cannot pick who you love, eat or drink freely and risk your house being confiscated.

That is the stark reality for many displaced and refugee Palestinians according to the director of leading human rights organisation Al Haq, Shawan Jabarin.

Retired Supreme Court judge Hal Wootten, AC QC, recently invited Mr Jabarin to Charles Sturt University Dubbo to give residents an insight on Palestinian life.

Well-known Dubbo identity Frank Doolan thanked Mr Jabarin for visiting the city and asked the crowd to listen "not only with your ears but with your hearts."

"I believe Palestine has a right to exist and I have a problem with Israel's abuse of human rights and violation of international laws," he said.

Mr Wootten told the audience he spent three months in Palestine where he met Mr Jabarin and his stay left a number of impressions on him.

Palestinians were friendly, generous, loving and caring and he was puzzled how the situation between Israel and Palestine survived in the 21st century.

After he examined the historical and political contexts he was convinced Palestinians struggled to live as normal humans.

"Shawan is a man of enormous courage and determination who stands up for human rights," he said welcoming him.

Mr Jabarin said his human rights organisation was the first to be established in the Middle East in 1979.

There were many similarities to what was happening in Palestine and what happened to Aborigines with land being the main issue, he said.

"We are the Aborigines of Palestine," he said.

"They (Israel) are confiscating



Retired Supreme Court Judge Hal Wootten, Maria Bennett and director of Palestine human rights organisation Al Haq Shawan Jabarin at CSU Dubbo.
Photo: BELINDA SOOLE

our land and restricting our existence but it is our land, our home."

Mr Jabarin asked the audience how they would feel if their house was taken away from them and they had limited access to natural resources such as water.

He said the Israeli occupation of land and settlement of Palestinians was a "colonial regime and apartheid".

"Is there justice (in pushing) people off their land, to demolish their houses and send them to the street homeless without taking anything with them?" he said.

"From a political perspective this works because they force people to lose hope and leave the

country. They do this to get one thing: minimise Palestinians and annex as much land to Israel."

This was not a biased view, but well documented as a breach of human rights under international law.

Mr Jabarin said after a family was kicked out of their house and their land confiscated, they were stripped from any rights enjoyed by the Israeli who lived on either side of them.

Israeli military rule dictated what Palestinians could plant and several fruit and vegetables were on the forbidden list.

Avocado was banned as it was a "capital tree" which Israelis could

only use, he said.

Marriage was a personal choice between a man and woman but not in Palestine.

"Would the Israelis let my partner who is a Palestinian working in Jerusalem or who lives in Jordan, join me?" he said.

"They won't because they'll lose their ID as they treat them as permanent residents and not a citizen so they have no rights."

"They are fragmenting society by separating family, confiscating the land and leaving them homeless. This is a daily struggle for Palestinians."

Mr Jabarin said a Palestinian was barred from entering

Jerusalem, a holy place for Christians, Jews and Muslims.

If he wanted to visit he had to apply to the Israeli Interior Ministry and fill form after form, attend an interview where he would be abused and then thrown out of the office and denied a visiting visa - all in the name of "security reasons".

"Everything is hid behind this excuse and you don't know what they mean," he said.

Access to clean water which was a basic human right was restricted to break Palestinians and force them to flee the country.

"It is a struggle and discrimination," he said.

"Palestinians are only allowed 35 litres of water a day while Israeli Jews have access to 450 litres of water a day."

Mr Jabarin said there could be no peace without justice and no stability without a peace process.

However, he strongly believed Israel did not want peace, and was "throwing an illusion" to the international community acting in the name of peace, but their actions proved the opposite.

The international community had to pressure Israel to act according to its legal obligations, to sanction and pressure them economically and politically to act.

Mr Jabarin said Palestinians would not surrender and were standing firmly for their rights.

"I have faith and hope we will get peace and justice one day," he said.

"My role is to shorten the time we live in injustice."

"There's no future for oppression, occupation or regimes. There is a future for a free society."

He encouraged Dubbo residents to visit Palestine and see the plight of his people with their own eyes.

"The Israelis built their future on the element of force and power but we built it on justice and hope," he said.

abanob.saad@ruralpress.com

Narromine teacher awarded for leadership and mentoring

A NARROMINE teacher has been presented an award for her excellent service to public education by the Director-General of the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), Dr Michele Bruniges.

Jo-Anne Ellis, a teacher at Narromine Public School, was one of seven educators in western NSW awarded the honour, as they joined 23 others from around the state at a Sydney presentation recently.

Described by the DEC as a stage leader and whole-school mentor in literacy, Ms Ellis led the implementation of literacy and numeracy programs within the school,

utilising a peer-mentoring model for teacher-professional learning and coaching through classroom application.

"Her excellent leadership in professional learning and applied practice has meant that evidence-based approaches have been widely implemented," a DEC spokesman said.

Her teaching expertise had extended beyond the school as she supported professional learning at Yeoval and Trangie central schools.

"Ms Ellis is a talented teacher whose excellent service to education has far exceeded her nominal classroom responsibilities," the spokesman said.

"She is highly regarded by her colleagues and has supported school education group and regional events. She is a worthy recipient of this award."

Dr Bruniges said the annual awards were presented to individuals who had made a significant contribution to public education and training in NSW.

"They are outstanding examples of the dedication of staff who work in and with schools and TAFE colleges in this state," she said.

The other western NSW teachers were from Kelso, Gulgong, Mudgee and TAFE Western.

Photo contributed



RIGHT: Jo-Anne Ellis, recipient of the NSW Department of Education and Communities' award for excellent service to public education for her work at Narromine Public School.
Photo contributed



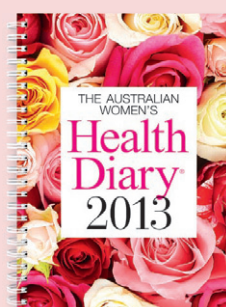
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