

Bearing Witness

Eight weeks in Palestine

Ana Barahona



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D. says that he can not believe that this has been a Saturday, because only my stoning and another two have happened today. M. tells us that there is a huge respect in Palestine and other countries for "internationals" like us, who, M. says, leave "the comforts from your homes, your education, your work, your families, to come here and suffer with us Palestinians." Abu A. goes on about our very important mission here in Palestine and back home, telling what we have seen here. This book is part of that telling.

Available from : <https://network23.org/ana/writings/bo...>

Or contact the author directly.

Early reviews: "A very powerful and moving testimony of experiences in Palestine of a human rights observer, as someone who has gone in solidarity to witness and to physically help and protect Palestinian people. The tone and pacing of the book are awesome." "It is very clear and does not get bogged down in facts and technicalities. Instead what comes across very clearly is the awfulness of the everyday lives of Palestinians. Reading about their normal activities helps to get a very real idea of the repression and humiliation that they face. Not only does the author not 'star' in it, but she is able to report exactly what she did but in a way that brings out the situations of the Palestinians more so. It's definitely more than just a piece of witnessing." "Entirely moving, and with some sort of building tension. By the time the reader gets through Bi'lin and then to Hebron, it's impossible to not be moved." "Really interesting. The simple, present tense narrative helps to get into it and imagine the reality of the situation there and how the author felt."

Bearing Witness Details

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Ana says

WOW. It is really interesting. It is very clear and does not get bogged down in facts and technicalities. Instead what comes across very clearly is the awfulness of the everyday lives of Palestinians. Reading about their normal activities helps to get a very real idea of the repression and humiliation that they face. Not only does the author not 'star' in it, but she is able to report exactly what she did but in a way that brings out the situations of the Palestinians more so. It's definitely more than just a piece of witnessing, entirely moving, and with some sort of building tension. By the time the reader gets through Bi'lin and then to Hebron, it's impossible to not be moved. The simple, present tense narrative helps to get into it and imagine the reality of the situation there and how the author felt.

Its well written and well paced, one of those books that is hard to put down.

Giovana Celli says

I received a copy through Goodreads Giveaway (thanks!). The descriptions are very precise and I can only imagine the author's angst during her time in Palestine. I heard some stories of friends and relatives that went to Israel, but nothing about the life in the "other side". It's like leaving a nightmare without knowing what the next day will be like. The only (little) comfort for me is to know the army and civilians still respect the presence of internationals over there, while there are people willing to help.

Sarah says

I received this book through a Goodreads giveaway.

As far as a testament of what is happening in Palestine this book paints a very clear picture of the human rights violations and the countless humiliations that occur daily to the Palestinian people. This book also helps one to understand that the presence of internationals while important and helps the Palestinians harvest their crops and get from point A to point B and stops the violence from the Israeli settlers and soldiers for a time, it is truly not enough. Palestinians are still dying. The ethnic cleansing is still happening. More must be done. And while a book gets the word out there, its not enough.

I also appreciate that the author doesn't even flinch as using the word illegal as I'm sure many westerners would.

Cole says

A wonderfully eye-opening diary that I could not put down. Extremely educational, yet still attention grabbing and heart pulling. I will be passing this book on to my friends.

Beth Sammons says

Wow what an eye opener. Most of my knowledge about this area of the world is through the eyes of the Israeli's - not that I have thought all the Palestinians were terrorists. My overall thoughts about the book: I wish it had been broken down into smaller chapters - I wish it hadn't been so one sided. There was a slight mention of Hamas but it was as if they were just poor farmers - not the suicide bombers and terrorists that they are. At this point my feeling is neither side is "right" but both sides aren't wrong either. Both sides are waging a war that has gone on for centuries and at some point the land needs to be divided, they need to stop lobbing bombs and blowing each other up and get on with life. Sometimes it is the terrorists' fault that their people have to live the terrible lives they live. If they spent more money on water and food supplies instead of guns, bombs etc maybe their people would be better off? Although this book has softened my heart somewhat toward Palestine I don't blame the Israelis for thinking that every last one of them could be a terrorist and have a bomb ready to blow up a school or market. I don't think the Israelis should be building these settlements and the last I paid attention they were dismantling them - there wasn't any timeline mentioned in the book so I am not sure when it was written and when she was there. I didn't mean for this to be a political review but I guess I couldn't help it with the subject matter.

Ashley says

I'm honestly not sure that I can articulate yet what the experience of this book was like, especially reading it while watching and reading news of the horrors occurring in Gaza right now with the IDF incursion, so I will do my best for now and revisit this review when my mind can decompress a bit.

I am generally quite "over" the glut of experience stories and memoirs flooding the market. I find that they're usually not saying anything new, interesting, important, or articulate. "Bearing Witness" is the extreme opposite of that. She gives us gorgeous writing and storytelling. She gives us insights from the tiniest of details that others with a less keen eye wouldn't catch in their analysis. She recognizes that she is not the story here. She gives us the voices of people who don't have any.

I have been reading a lot of Palestinian and Israeli autobiographies recently, because I think it's our vital duty to understand what the peoples involved in this obscene conflict see and feel about it. What I kept thinking while reading this is that Ana somehow manages to do a better job conveying the experiences and emotions of average Palestinians than they do, at least in the memoirs I've read. Perhaps having this type of mediator, to take the story and turn it into *writing*, is the way to do it.

Buy the book. Just buy it. I don't know what much more to say right now; the impact is still too great. I will be ordering copies for a few friends. It could never be more important to read than right now. It doesn't matter where you stand or which flag you wave -- we have to hear the voices of those impacted the most. It's our duty as human beings. I'm proud of Ana, this stranger across the sea, for having gone and done it, and then giving us this gift for which I am so grateful.

Aaron Meyer says

If you want a day by day view into the life of the Palestinians you can't do no worse than this book. What is happening in the occupied territory is unwarranted and without the handful of international observers that go over to Palestine to help it would be much more worse than it already is. Israel has become that which it supposedly hates. All the cries of "Woe is us and the genocide perpetrated by the Nazi's" is naught anymore due to their own actions today. If the Nazi's were so bad then what does that make the Jews of Israel? The author shows clearly through the incidents she herself has been through the tragedy which has been unfolding in Palestine since the Israeli State was formed. What will it take to make this stop? I don't know, and no answers are given in this short volume, unfortunately, except perhaps that the message needs to get out to more people around the world. Only then perhaps will things change through the pressure of public opinion on the governments of the world who can truly force Israel to change.

I received this book through the Goodreads Giveaway program.

On a side note that some may find of interest, this book came from England. It is the first piece of mail from Britain that I have received that was opened by customs and I have received many mailings from that country. I do find it rather coincidental that this happened considering the subject of the mailing.

Emma says

Bearing Witness is a travalogue of a woman who spent eight weeks volunteering in Palestine. The book is simply a record of an experience without attempt to editorialise or to place in a wider context - except when making clear that what is happening is illegal in international law. Ana Barahona travelled around the country staying with various people whoes lives were endangered - only her presence preventing violence.

The situation in Palestine is clearly atrocious and international powers clearly haven't got the will to do anything about it. I found this a very clear view without the rhetoric of what life is like. It proposes no solution and doesn't cast blame beyond where it is readily apparent. It simply presents the situation as it is.

Gavin White says

For ages I have avoided the whole issue of Israel and Palestine - partly because there is so much to learn even to have a minimally informed view, partly because of the irreconcilable polarity of the debate and the intensity with which it is pursued.

This book is refreshingly different. It is an honest and open-minded account of an eight week stay in Palestine by a volunteer worker. It cuts through the political rhetoric by revealing the everyday lives of ordinary Palestinians for whom daily life is an unrelenting struggle. The people themselves, their reality and their dreams are centre stage; here you get in touch with their struggle, their suffering and their hopes. It is a challenging book in that it forced me to think about the whole thorny issue. At the same time, it is an inspirational book as what shines through is the human spirit and its unalienable striving for freedom, justice and truth.

It's well written and well paced, one of those books that is hard to put down. I'd heartily recommend it for anyone wanting to see the human side of the broader situation in Palestine.

Ana says

A page turner, very engaging, Very good, enjoyable, informative and touching.

A very powerful and moving testimony of experiences in Palestine of a human rights observer, as someone who has gone in solidarity to witness and to physically help and protect Palestinian people. The tone and pacing of the book are awesome.

Lindsay says

I am not completely surprised, that as an American, I haven't been aware of this situation. It becomes clearer that our media is biased in various ways...

Ana, you have certainly raised MY awareness, and I will share this book!

I love your writing style. The tense choice makes the action real . It's now!

I am moved by your story. I am impressed by you as a person, as a woman. What you did on your journey and now writing about it, is courageous. Bravo!

Please let me know about your future publishing.

Ana says

It lost a bit not having all the pictures, but then it was a reason to check them out on the author's blog and there are even more there!

Tina says

I found myself gripped by the simple, eloquent narrative of this real-life experience in Palestine. The hardship endured by the Palestinians due to the ever-expanding illegal occupation by the Israeli government is hard to comprehend. The cruelty exhibited towards those whose lives are constantly disrupted through a long-term campaign of harassment gave me a rising feeling of anger at the international governments who collude through inaction. Treaties, UN rules, nothing seems to stop this cruelty. Ms Barahona speaks purely as an observer, which was the role she took, and the gratitude of the Palestinians is almost painful to read.

I was aware of the conflict before, but not the reality of the action on the ground. Now I am. This book is enlightening, enraging and vital to read. Strongly recommended.
