

My name is Chris Cowan. I live in Ames. In 2011, I worked with the World Council of Churches in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. I became friends with Palestinian and Bedouin villagers in their daily lives, as they eked out a living herding sheep in the rugged, beautiful hills south of Hebron.

I remember visiting the village of Zanuta one crisp fall day. On a windy ridge, we enjoyed the view, while a shepherd milked a goat, boiled the milk with a little sugar, and served it to us. He spoke with us that day about the visible increase of Israeli settlements, the reduction of grazing land.

That memory, like many, is bittersweet. Now the village of Khirbet Zanuta is abandoned, its 150 people scattered. They made the agonizing choice to [uproot themselves](#) on October 30, forced by armed Israeli settlers accompanied by soldiers to leave. The settlers came repeatedly by night to attack the villagers in their homes, terrorizing them, bent on driving them off the land. It's becoming commonplace - numerous [other villages](#) I know are experiencing the same threat. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [reports](#) that sixteen villages have been abandoned and over 1100 people displaced in the West Bank, just since the start of the Gaza war! This is illegal under international law, and is part of a trend of rapidly [rising violence](#) in West Bank.

Let us pray: for peace based on justice, for ALL people. Amen.