

Palestinians issue call for peace

BY STACY JENKINS
STAFF WRITER

The pain on the faces of local Palestinian Americans was evident, as many of the Ramallah natives told stories of terror, murder and chaos in their homeland.

Western Wayne County and Oakland County has the largest concentration of Ramallahs in the United States, said Terry Ahwal of Canton, who is an assistant Wayne County executive and member of the American Federation of Ramallah, Palestine.

The escalating violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza regions of the Middle East has prompted local Palestinian activists to rally for peace and to call for an end to the 35-year Israeli occupation they say has stripped their people of basic human rights.

Israeli troops, on Monday, surrounded the City of Bethlehem and have waged daily attacks on the West Bank city of Ramallah, where about 10,000 western Wayne County and Oakland County residents were born.

"The City of Ramallah, our families, are under siege. They are imprisoned in their own homes," said Samir Mashni of Canton.

Mashni, a past president of the American Federation of Ramallah, Palestine, was one of several Ramallahs who spoke out during a Tuesday press conference at the association's Westland meeting hall. They denounced the violence, suicide bombings and the United States financial assistance to Israel.

"We, as community, strongly emphasize there is no military solution to this conflict," said the Rev. George Shalhoub, of Livonia's St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church. "We, as community,

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want peace, we pray for peace and hope for peace. Sunday, we stood outside of our church and we prayed for peace. But, our people are still being crucified."

Jad Jadalal of Dearborn spoke of his 21-year-old niece, who was killed Friday while traveling in a car with her husband and 7-month-old baby near Ramallah. An American citizen, she and her family recently moved back to Ramallah.

On Friday, they were driving injured Palestinians to the hospital, following the latest round of Israeli attacks on civilians. Her husband was shot five times and was in critical condition in the hospital, said Jadalal.

"She was an American citizen," he said. "We, as United States citizens, have to pressure the United States. A lot of United States citizens are being hurt, too."

A Catholic priest, speaking to reporters from a town near Bethlehem on Tuesday, described the

growing violence of recent days in and around Bethlehem. The group of Ramallahs gathered around the speaker phone to hear the Rev. Baderian Shw-shawki's personal accounts of recent events.

"The situation in Bethlehem is difficult and I think it's getting worse," he said. "Israeli troops are attacking everything."

Two hours prior, he was informed that a Catholic priest was shot and killed and three nuns were shot in Bethlehem. The city is under siege, he added.

"There is no pressure for the Israelis to leave Bethlehem," he said. "They are shooting all of the places surrounding the nativity. They are neglecting all of the world and all of the demands of all of the leaders of the world."

Critics in the region are under 24-hour curfew, meaning they cannot leave their homes or businesses. People are running out of

food and many have no electricity or running water. Palestinian homes are being occupied by Israeli troops, while the families are held hostage in one room of the home.

The injured cannot receive medical attention from Red Cross personnel, due to the standing curfew. Hospitals and churches are being invaded by Israeli troops and the dead are not being buried.

The priest, speaking from a convent about 10 minutes outside of Bethlehem, said his church and convent are now a makeshift medical facility. People are coming in for help, he said, but are fearful that the church is a bombing target.

Canton's Terry Ahwal said the situation is not new, but it is certainly more intense. She recalls being 11 years old in Ramallah and having to hide under a truck for 20 minutes as she tried to sneak to a neighbor's house, three doors down, during curfew.

"The same is happening today, except these kids are being shot today at close range," she said. "Violence is not going to get us anywhere."

OBITUARIES

MARION A. GUEST

Private services were held for Marion Aliene Guest, 88, of Farmington Hills.

Mrs. Guest was born March 7, 1914, in Detroit and died March 28, 2002.

She is survived by her children, Judith (Larry LaVorce), Tribby, Margery, Lad (Christiane Modrack) and Christian (Barbara); grandchildren,

Larry, John, Richard, Natalie, Eli, Eliza, Lauren, Judah, Andrew, Jamison, Nicholas, Amilia, Olivia, Aurelia, Christian and Henry; 16 great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

She is preceded in death by her husband Harry.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Farmington Community Library.

Earth Angels plan benefit for April 21

The Earth Angels, who do choreographed dance routines to songs of the 1960s, will host their annual fund-raiser from 4 p.m.-8 p.m. on Sunday, April 21 at the Costick Center in Farmington Hills.

Activities will include games, dance, hula hoop and best '60s costume contests, door prizes and a performance

by the Earth Angels. A pizza dinner will be served.

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