Opinion
Guest Voices



Zoughbi Zoughbi poses for a photo May 4, 2019, near the door of a cave that was the ancestral home of his family in Bethlehem, West Bank. (CNS/Debbie Hill)



by John Dear

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On this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," I speak with one of the great peacemakers of our time, my friend Zoughbi Zoughbi of Bethlehem, West Bank, whom I first met in 1990.

Zoughbi is a lifelong Catholic Palestinian activist, organizer and teacher of Gospel nonviolence. Long ago, he founded Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center in the center of Bethlehem, where I've been several times. Wi'am is widely recognized as a place of nonviolent conflict resolution that helps Palestinians in the day-to-day struggle for justice and peace. For the last few years, he has also served as the president of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, a peace group founded in 1914.

"Our dream is to educate all children in the world in peace and nonviolence, to get all religious leaders to preach the refusal of war, terrorism and violence, to get everyone to work for a world without war and nuclear weapons," he said.

"This is the first time in history that Bethlehem and Jerusalem are separated, that you cannot travel between them," Zoughbi said. "We are living in reservations, separated from each other. Bethlehem is becoming a smaller reservation surrounded by 23 settlements and many outposts. The West Bank is a prison; Gaza is a concentration camp. Every day, we see more prisoners, houses being demolished, state violence, settler violence and environmental violence. The situation is moving from worse to the worst."

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"I want my people to live their life and know their rights, to work for a culture of acceptance, to resolve conflict nonviolently. We are exposing the atrocities of the occupation, and ask people to be in solidarity for us. We are all global citizens of a global world. I want all Christian brothers and sisters to walk in our shoes. Come and visit! Stop aiding and supporting Israel, its weapons, wars and occupation. I don't want the Holy Land to become a museum without people."

"Jesus was soft on people, but hard on the system," he said. "He asks us to love each other and to struggle against injustice. ... Hope for me is a form of nonviolent struggle. We are going to become the Beloved Community one day!"

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. View the full series.