



**Mohammed Owedah** was born in the village of Silwan, near the Western Wall and the Temple Mount in Eastern Jerusalem. He has lived there ever since and works as a social worker. Mohammed has served in several positions in Combatants for Peace, including, as the Palestinian coordinator of the Jerusalem - Al Kutz group, and is a member of the management forum of the movement.

My name is Mohammed Owedah. I am the firstborn of a family of 6 siblings. I come from the village of Silwan, near the Western Wall and the Temple mount in Jerusalem. Silwan is considered the center of the resistance movement against the occupation in Jerusalem.

During the first Intifada, three of my brothers were arrested several times and my mother was diagnosed with cancer. I would join her to visit my brothers in jail. One day, a day I will never forget, a commander from the Shabak (The Israeli General Secret Service) in Silwan came to our house and told my mother that she would never enjoy any holiday because each holiday he would take one of her children, and so it was - every holiday he would take one of my brothers and put him in prison for a few days. Afterwards he would release him, but the holiday would be ruined.

One day a taskforce of Israeli soldiers took one of my brothers and broke his shoulder. On the way to the hospital with him I felt as if everything had been taken from me. It is so hard to see your brother broken and hurt without anyone admitting to having done it. After a short time these soldiers were attacked and I was accused, together with my friends, of having avenged my brother's attack. I was detained and investigated for 3 months without confessing. When I was in prison I saw children my brothers' age fighting over food and humiliated, 30 kids sleeping in one room without toilets or a shower, kids unable to walk because of all the beatings. I felt that there was no justice and my hatred of the occupation grew.

When I was released for a short time, before returning to prison, I received the good news that I had been accepted to law school but shortly after I was rejected from enrollment because now I was officially an outlaw. So I went to work with my dad to help him after the intifada ruined his business, to help out with his legal bills and to help provide for the family.

Then the Oslo agreements were signed and we believed that we would have our freedom and our own state, then Israel broke the agreements and the right wing rose to power in Israel after prime minister Rabin was assassinated, which led to the second Intifada. I thought all was lost and that we were back to square one. But I didn't want my children to have the life that their father and uncle had. I founded groups in Silwan and Eastern Jerusalem and I called for non-violent resistance against the occupation. I did not have much success because the media was not interested in us. I took this mission upon myself although all my friends told me it was dangerous and that I would be considered a collaborator. Nonetheless, I started to get acquainted with left-winged organizations to see who shared our views. This is how I got to know Combatants for Peace. We started activities and in-house meetings in Silwan and Eastern Jerusalem, things I was proud of and finally people from both sides discovered that they were the same and that not all Jews were soldiers and not all Arabs were terrorists, and that their differences could be summed up to one word - narrative. Still my story is not over and freedom is still a long way away, but it is within reach. Inshallah

