


Emad Burnat
Bilin Village
West Bank
Occupied Palestine

03 September 2016

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu
c/o Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation NPC
Suite 111, 1st Floor, Clock Tower
Waterfront
8001



Dearest Archbishop Desmond Tutu,

I am Emad, director the Palestinian film Five Broken Cameras. But I am also really just a man who aims to raise his sons, love his wife and lead a quiet, normal life, contributing to justice and peace where I can.

I know that I am just one of thousands of well wishers who are perhaps flooding your inbox with messages of support and love during this time of ill-health. I hope that this message will not be lost in the sea of messages you are most definitely receiving from the world over.

I am just an ordinary Palestinian who once had the humble privilege of meeting you. I clearly recall the day you visited our small village of Bil'in in Palestine. It was in 2009, you came with former US President Jimmy Carter, former Brazilian President Fernando Cardoso, India's Ela Bhatt, former Irish President Mary Robinson, Jeff Skoll of eBay and businessman Richard Branson.

You came to our little village of Bil'in, a village refusing to succumb to Israel's occupation. You saw first hand Israel's Apartheid Wall that is cutting us off from our fields, neighbours and from each other. While you were with us you explained how you recognised Israel's system of oppression as being similar to the Apartheid regime, and you later went into detail on how our Palestinian experience under Israel's occupation was similar to your experience under Apartheid South Africa.

It was so humbling to have met you, as your story has inspired many of my people in our peaceful resistance against Israel's inhumanity.

I think of you, not just because of your inspiration and briefly meeting you, but because I am currently visiting South Africa as part of the United Nations Media Seminar hosted by and at South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation in Pretoria.

I am finally in your beautiful country! I am touched by the country's vibrant diversity

and democracy which, with all its problems and challenges, is our beacon of hope. I am deeply inspired and motivated by the various activists, solidarity organisations and the work of the BDS movement in this country.

At the same time, dearest Archbishop, I am also deeply concerned and distressed to hear of your ill-health. Frailty is a part of the human condition and we embrace it, some embrace it not as graciously as what you have but its all part of life. Empathy and concern are also a part of the human condition, although, as the Israeli occupation has demonstrated over and over again, it is something that some human beings seem to choose not to embrace.

I write to you to express my empathy with your current frailty and concern about your ill-health. Above all, I offer our prayers that you will be well again. You, Archbishop, have been the personification of empathy with the frail and the oppressed and we give thanks to God for your presence in the world. I wish you on behalf of the people of my village and the entirety of us Palestinians strength and support.

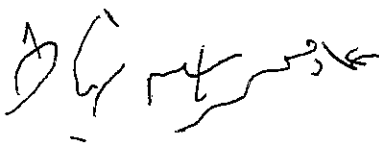
You have done so much for our cause and struggle, given hope to so many of our mothers, fathers and children and you have inspired generations of our younger activists.

Palestine and we Palestinians will be free and your contribution towards our freedom will go down in history books. Like Apartheid South Africa and white supremacy, Israel's occupation and its underpinning ideology will also be consigned to the dustbins of history and all the current Israeli supporters will one day also be embarrassed and will claim to have "actually" supported freedom for all us Palestinians. We will forgive, but we will not forget those who chose to support Israel's occupation, or as you put it, apartheid regime. We will also painfully remember, but forgive, those who chose to remain neutral in this situation of injustice.

The world is a better place because of you.

Warmth and love, and strength during this difficult time.

Emad Burnat

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Emad Burnat', with a stylized flourish at the end.