

treatment room. We quickly set up the supplies and in minutes someone's home was converted into a mini-clinic. Soon patients began arriving, first in a trickle, then in a stream and eventually a flood of people crowded the tiny room and overflowed out the door and down the narrow street. As evening fell, the tension in the reception room visibly rose as camp residents, fearful of not being treated and not knowing when they'd have another chance to be, began arguing among themselves for places in line. More than once the head doctor emerged from the examination room to reassure those waiting that everyone would be treated. As I observed the chaotic but heartening scene around me - crying babies with runny noses, old women complaining of a litany of ailments to anyone who'd listen, nervous mothers clutching their bruised and bandaged children and jittery *shabab* chain-smoking as they peered out the door watching for soldiers - I noticed above the door a portrait from perhaps the last century. A distinguished-looking man dressed in traditional Palestinian garb, gazed out onto the room with a stern but proud face. Most certainly he was the ancestral patriarch of the family whose house-cum-clinic we were using. I wondered what he would have to say about the scene before him.

Near the end of the evening, a young man I hadn't seen around suddenly appeared and asked to see the doctor. He was taken into the examining room and a few moments later re-emerged with the head doctor who was carrying his medical bag. The remaining medical team continued to see the few patients who were still waiting, as he went to tend a gunshot victim who hadn't risked going to hospital and could not make it to the clinic.

When the doctor returned, we packed up what supplies remained and were served hot Arabic coffee. As we sat around sipping the coffee, the room fell silent, the tired medical team looking understandably dazed: in just over two hours they had seen about 125 patients. After loading the supplies into the cars outside, we looked out onto the camp and were startled by what we saw: several small fires shimmered in the night, dotting the surrounding area in every direction. We quickly got into the cars and began driving towards the camp's main entrance. As we did so, on several occasions *shebab* removed barricades that had been newly erected so we could pass. Around the fires, men and women of all ages stood talking and watching. We could see young boys gathering stones, sticks, cinderblocks and pieces of metal - anything that could be used to defend the camp against soldiers and settlers who frequently attacked the camp. Jalazon was preparing for another night of the intifada.

On the road leading back to Ramallah, at almost the same spot where the roadblock had been earlier in the day, we came across a convoy of army jeeps and settlers' cars speeding towards where we had just come from.

The fight for proper medical care and its administration in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip has essentially just begun. Yet in the face of often brutal measures taken by the occupation authorities, the Palestinian community, with the appropriate help of international organizations, is continuing its struggle to maintain a physically and mentally healthy population. These efforts are inextricably linked with the intifada, and together they are building a healthy future in Palestine. ●

Jalazon refugee camp, West Bank

