

The Cost of Friendship

When I first moved to a country community in Israel, I remember seeing an Arab man named Abdul helping the Jewish people with a variety of tasks. He was well liked by everyone on the Moshav, especially by my landlord who hired him. He was very personable, always laughing and joking with the people, but also a hard worker.

Abdul was invited into many Jewish homes for meals and was treated as family by many of them. I thought this was so wonderful, but unfortunately it is not so common in Israel anymore.

One day my neighbor was crying hysterically so I asked what happened. Her husband told me that Abdul was accused by the Palestinian Authority, (PA) of collaborating with the 'enemy,' the Jews. He tried to defend himself by telling the PA that he was only working to provide for his family. They refused to believe him, so Abdul was charged as a traitor to his people and then killed only because he had good relations with the Jewish people.

Shortly after Abdul's death, I saw his father riding up the dirt road on a donkey. When he arrived he pulled some pictures from his pocket to share with us. Tears began streaming down his cheeks as we gazed in shock at the images. He said to us "Look what they have done to my son!" In the pictures we saw, the PA had tied Abdul's ankles to the back bumper of a car, and drove through the streets of Bethlehem dragging Abdul's body for all to witness. This was meant as a clear message for all onlookers to beware of 'collaborating with or befriending the enemy'. His father said, "They didn't stop, even after my son was dead!"

The Authority wanted the people of Bethlehem to witness the fate of a so-called 'traitor.' It was a simple message, "Do

not embrace your enemy, the Jewish people, as your friend.” You see, the problem here is that many Jews and Arabs have grown close to one another because they have lived together as neighbors. Some have come to care for each other through the years, but don’t be deceived, the Palestinian people are not free, not even to choose their own friends.