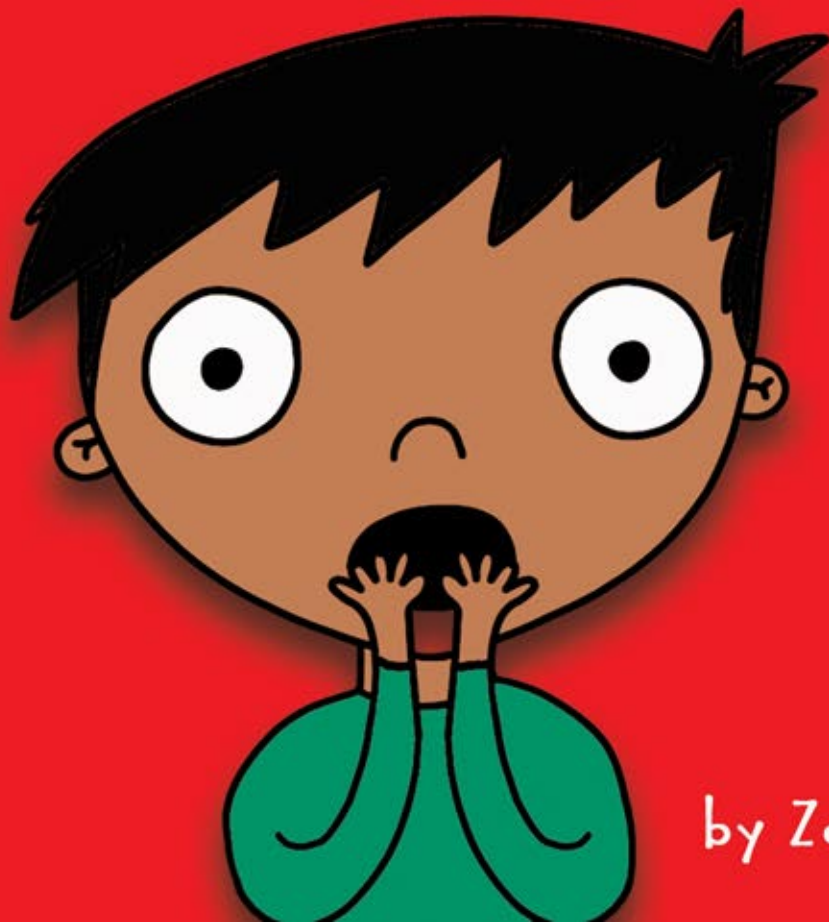


ELIYAS EXPLAINS

BITE-SIZE

WHAT'S GOING ON
in **PALESTINE** 😞 😞



Ages
8+

by Zanib Mian



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Ages 7+

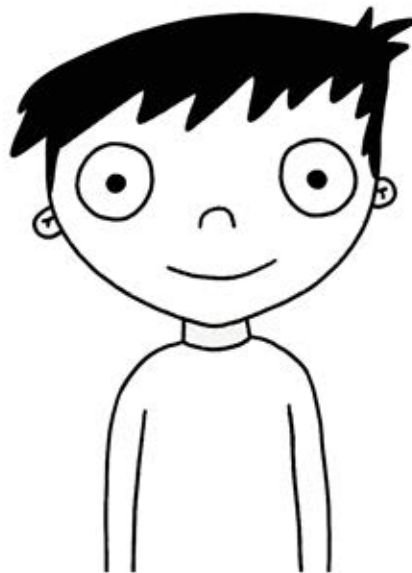
With thanks and duas for CAGE and MEND

ASALAMU ALAIKUM

(Did you know that means, 'Peace be with you.' So Salaam is basically greetings of Peace).

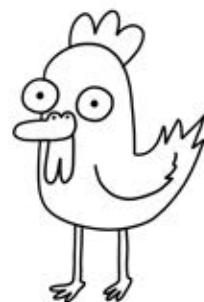
I'm Elias. If you've read an Elias Explains before, you know me. If you haven't, here's the quickest way to get to know me so I can tell you everything I learnt about Palestine and what's going on there right now (I'm writing this in October 2023).

This is my face.



(and some of
my body too)

**I LOVE animals - because of that, a
chicken once pooped in my lap.**



I LOVE Video games and Pizza - best day if I get them both together!

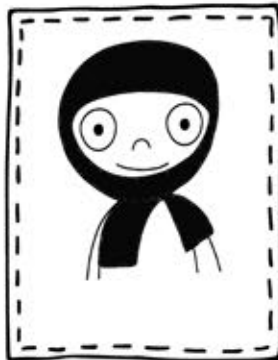
I have a sneaky 6 year old sister called Aasiya



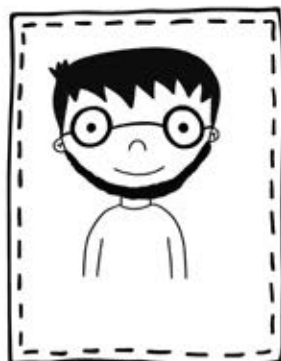
and a sticky 3 year old little brother called YUSUF.



THIS IS MY MUM. WHO MAKES ART TO SELL ONLINE,



AND THIS IS MY DAD, WHO WRITES BOOKS.



CHAPTER 1 - WHY IS PALESTINE SPECIAL?

Since last week everyone was talking about Palestine and Israel. My mum keeps looking at videos on her phone and crying. And my dad keeps getting cross at the TV because they're biased (this is how you say it: by-uh-st).



I KNEW MORE ABOUT HOW TO BUILD A SPACECRAFT THAN I DID ABOUT PALESTINE, and since it was the number one thing that everyone was talking about, when my family sat around the table to play a card game, instead of being super excited that I was dealt the **change colours card, AND the make someone pick up 4 card,** I asked Mum and Dad,



“WHAT’S GOING ON IN PALESTINE?”

Mum and Dad had the kind of expressions they have when they know they have to do something, but it's not going to be easy to do. Sort of like when they're trying to wash Yusuf's hair. Yusuf hates water on his head.

Mum sighed, put her cards down on the table and said, "Things have once again kicked off, and this

time everyone is paying attention, but the story of the occupation of Palestine is a story that goes way back in time. 😊

But then Dad said, "Actually, let's start by telling them about when the prophets (as) built **MASJID AL-AQSA IN PALESTINE** – a land that is mentioned in the Qur'an at least six times, because it is **blessed.**"

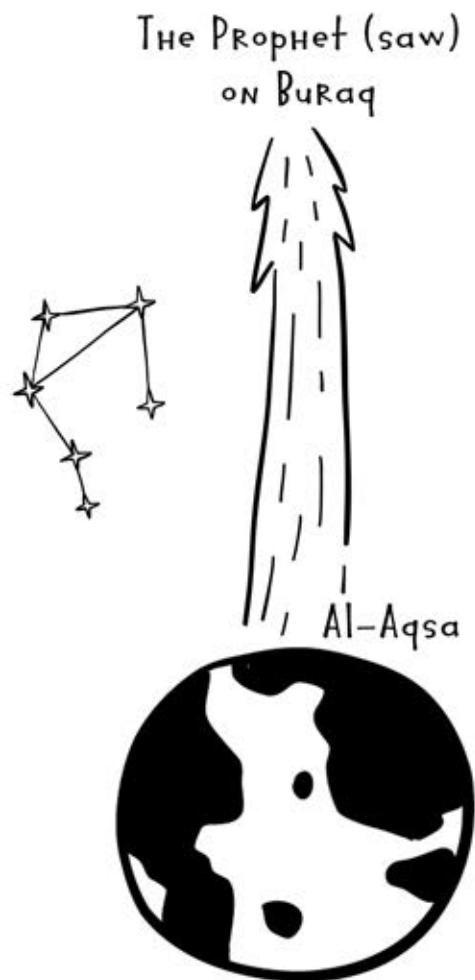


"Oh, of course," said Mum, "Al-Aqsa is the only masjid mentioned in the Qur'an by name, apart from Masjid Al-Haram in Makkah. It's in **JERUSALEM**, which is also a holy place to Jews and Christians.

Prophet Ibrahim (as) built Al-Aqsa, then prophet Dawud (as) started rebuilding it and **PROPHET SULAYMAN (AS) FINALLY COMPLETED THE BUILDING OF MASJID AL-AQSA**. It's really special. The Prophet Muhammad (saw) said, "Do not go on a journey to visit any mosque

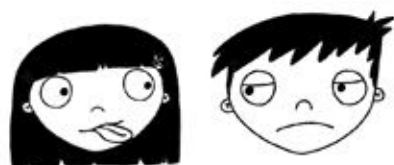
but these THREE: this mosque of mine (Madinah), Masjid Al-Haram (Makkah) and the Masjid of Al-Aqsa."

"Oh, wait!" I said, "That's where the Prophet (saw) went on **ISRA' WAL MI'RAJ**, the night journey, when he flew on the BURAQ and then went up to the heavens and talked to ALLAH!" 😲



"That's MY favourite story," Aasiya said. "But you missed out the bit about the Prophet (saw) leading all the other prophets in salah at Al-Aqsa." She stuck

HER tongue out at me.



"Yes, that's right," Mum smiled.

"So you understand how special Al-Aqsa is to Muslims," Dad nodded. "The reward for praying there is 500 times more than praying anywhere else, other than at the Kaba and the prophet's mosque in Madina."

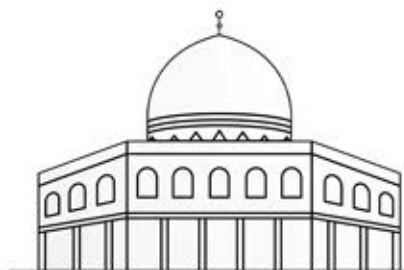
"So there's **3 SPECIAL PLACES FOR MUSLIMS?**

The masjid where the Kaaba is,



the Prophet's (saw) mosque in Madina

and Al-Aqsa?" I said.



"Smart," winked Dad, "Exactly right."

"OK, so that's all the way back to the Prophet's (saw) time but what's going on there in our times?" I asked, still bursting to know.

Aasiya screwed up her face with curiosity and sat on the edge of her seat waiting to hear.

CHAPTER 2 - OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE

Get comfortable – my parents told us lots of stuff and none of it is nice. 😞

Mum began, "Well, in our times, Palestine has been occupied by the state of Israel."

"What does that mean?" Aasiya said, screwing up her nose in confusion. 😐

"I've only ever heard that word for toilets, not a country," I said, "How is a country occupied?"


Mum smiled as she realised she wouldn't be able to explain anything until we understood that. "It's when the military—"

"You mean an **ARMY?**" I interrupted.

"Yes, army, navy etc," Dad said.

"So, it's when the military of a country takes control of the land of another country," Mum finished. "And you see, Palestine is under the control of the Israeli army, which it doesn't belong to. And under that occupation, the Palestinian people have suffered

Horrific attacks. They've had their homes and land stolen, and the **PEOPLE IN GAZA HAVE BEEN UNDER SIEGE FOR 17 YEARS, WITH THEIR WATER, ELECTRICITY, AND FREEDOM CONTROLLED. THEY CAN'T LEAVE. THEY DO NOT HAVE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS."**

"That's not fair!" I protested, bouncing out of my seat, "Why doesn't someone do something? Are they allowed to do that?" 

"Of course not," Dad shook his head, "the occupation of Palestine has been recognised by international law as an illegal occupation,

INTERNATIONAL LAW



OI! Stop that!
This occupation
is illegal.



And Jewish only settlements built on stolen Palestinian land have also been recognised as illegal."

INTERNATIONAL LAW



Hey! You can't steal
people's land and build
stuff on it they're not
allowed to live in!

"Wait, so is it a **jews vs Muslims thing?**" I asked.

"**NO. DEFINITELY NOT.** It's the **government** of **Israel** that is guilty of all of this against the **Palestinians**. **Many, many Jewish people** are also against what **Israel** does. **There are many Jewish activists, people that support the rights of the Palestinians,** 😎 and **historians** who wrote about what happened in the past. The **Jewish religion** is against all of the **horrors** that have been happening. **There are also many, many Christian Palestinians,**" Dad explained.

"Oh OK, that's good, because **Reuben** in my class is **Jewish** and I like him," I said.

"That's great, sweetie" Mum smiled. "You have to remember, that being against what the **Israeli government** does, and supporting the **Palestinians** does not mean being against **Jewish people**. **Jews** are believers of the **Torah**, which was given to **Musa (as)**, and as you know, we believe he was **Allah's messenger.**"

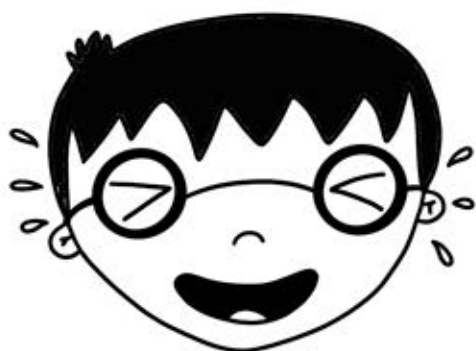
Hating the actions
of **Israel's government**



Hating **Jewish people**

This sign means,
does **NOT** equal.

Just then, Yusuf launched his blueberry yoghurt at the wall, mostly because nobody was giving him any attention. Mum screamed and ran to clean it up. Yusuf had a satisfied grin on his face.



But Aasiya and I were glued to Dad, asking him more questions about Palestine.

CHAPTER 3 - THE NAKBA AND APARTHEID

Dad told us that in **1948,**

Israel's military forced

**800,000
Palestinians**

to leave their homes and run for their lives.

800,000 people is a massive number. If 800,000 people stood in a line, the line would go from my house in London, all the way to Edinburgh in Scotland.



If 800,000 people stood in a straight line it would go almost all the way across the UK.

That's how many people were forced to leave their land. And they're not allowed to come back, even now.

Kind of reminds me of when I saw a kid in my class getting bumped off his seat by one of the mean kids. The smaller kid just flew off the chair, before the big kid sat on him. 🤪

So yeah, at that time, 450 villages were wiped out and around 15,000 Palestinians were killed. This is called the first catastrophe - **THE NAKBA.**

AND THEN IN 1967, ISRAEL LAUNCHED ANOTHER WAR AND OCCUPIED GAZA AND THE WEST BANK TOO. THEY INVADED JERUSALEM. THEY MARCHED INTO THE HOLY AL-AQSA COMPLEX AND TOOK CONTROL.



GAZA

2.3 million people live in this tiny space.

FOR 17 YEARS, THE PEOPLE HERE HAVE BEEN LOCKED IN. THEY CAN'T COME AND GO AND THEIR ELECTRICITY AND WATER IS CONTROLLED. THIS MEANS THEY CAN'T GET ENOUGH FOOD AND FUEL AND PEOPLE ARE VERY POOR HERE. LOTS OF KIDS UNDER 18 LIVE HERE, ALMOST HALF THE POPULATION.

THE WEST BANK

THIS IS WHERE JEWISH ONLY SETTLEMENTS HAVE BEEN BUILT

JERUSALEM

AL-AQSA CONTROLLED BY ISRAELI FORCES

300,000 more Palestinians lost their homes in 1967.

I figured out I would need 6000 lunch boxes to fit 300,000 marbles.

BASICALLY, THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED A LOT, FOR THE LAST 75 YEARS. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I THINK THEY'RE LIKE SUPERHEROES. THE STRONGEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.

AT SCHOOL, WE LEARNT ABOUT **NELSON MANDELA** AND HOW HE IS A HERO FOR FIGHTING APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA. MY TEACHER TOLD ME THAT APARTHEID IS WHEN SOME PEOPLE

are treated differently when they live in the same place, because of their race. There are different laws for them. When Nelson Mandela started fighting against apartheid, they chucked him in jail and called him a terrorist, and now, like I said, we learn about him at school because EVERYONE KNOWS HE WAS A HERO! 😎



THIS IS WHAT HE SAID:

"BUT WE KNOW TOO WELL THAT OUR FREEDOM IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT THE FREEDOM OF THE PALESTINIANS".

AND GUESS WHAT?!

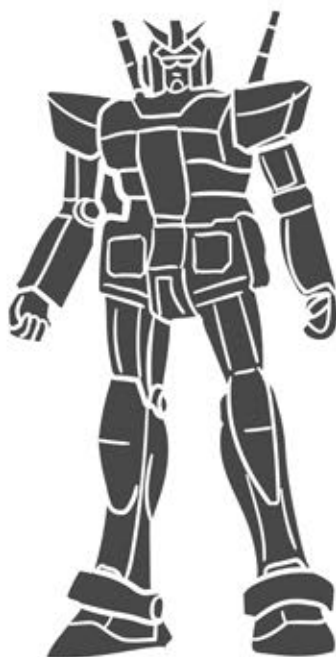
Dad told me all these important and fancy guys have rightly accused Israel of being an Apartheid state too:

- **Amnesty International**
- **Human Rights Watch**
- **A UN expert**
- **AND even a former head of Israel's own intelligence agency.**

WAIT! WHAT'S THE UN? 🤔

It's an organisation with almost all the countries in the world. They try to find peaceful ways for countries to sort out stuff they disagree on and if fighting does break out, sometimes, they send in troops to stop it. They stand for human rights and they help countries which have been in a war.

By the way, I found out that Israel has a very powerful military, with all sorts of defences and tanks and an intelligence agency called Mosad, which is their version of the CIA, to stop the Palestinians from resisting the occupation. But the Palestinians don't have the money to have all of that, so if they do try to stand up for themselves, and a fight breaks out, it's a really, really unfair fight, like a giant powerful robot against a toaster.

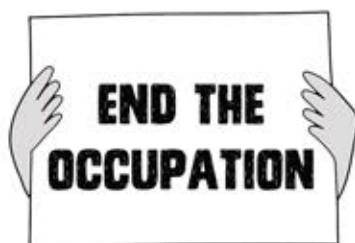


So, Aasiya and I learnt all of that and then Mum got back from cleaning the blueberry yoghurt off the wall. She'd been listening to Dad filling us in and said it's time to talk about what's going on right now...

CHAPTER 4 - WHAT'S GOING ON IN PALESTINE?

The cards we didn't even start playing were still on the table. Aasiya chewed the edge of one and was all ears. So was I, super of course. 🧐

Mum said, "And now that you have a bit of an understanding, let's talk about what is happening in Palestine now," Mum said. "Throughout the years, since the occupation, the Palestinians have tried to resist. They have tried all the ways they can think of. Sometimes peacefully, like marching,



and sometimes with force. This time, it was with force, so there has been violence in Israel and in Palestine. People on both sides have suffered and the world is watching. Most of the world doesn't know about the

decades of suffering of the Palestinians under the occupation, but they are learning. The world is watching now, as Israel is committing **war crimes** against the Palestinian people.

Whaaaaaaaaaat?!

Stop the genocide!

No!

These are war crimes!

Where is humanity?

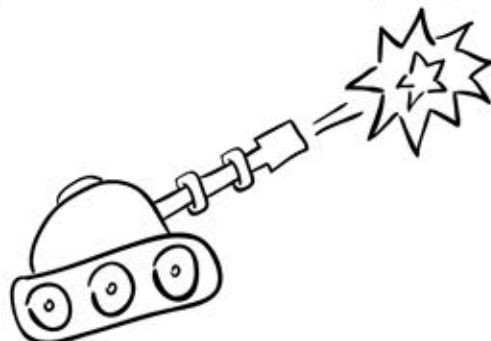


Not in my name!

The Israeli government have completely shut off

**WATER, FOOD, FUEL,
ELECTRICITY, AND MEDICINE**

Everything humans need to live. And they are launching bombs, destroying Gaza and the people in it.



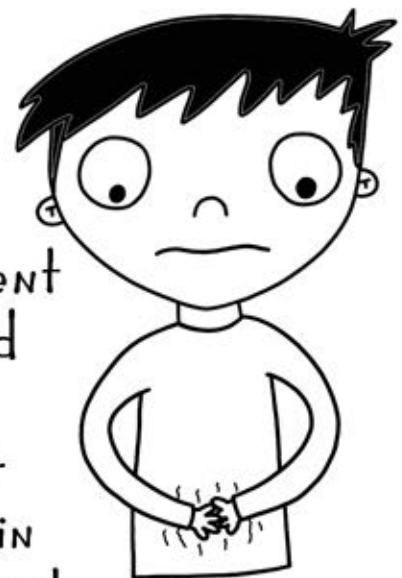
Thousands of people have already been killed, and more than a million have had to leave their homes and run to other parts of Gaza, but can't leave. They are thirsty. They are hungry. And if they are injured, they can't be treated. Even hospitals and churches are being bombed. These are war crimes and these actions are breaking international laws. It's inhumane. It's unthinkable." 😱 😞

Aasiya looked scared, so Dad cuddled her close to him. "People are dead?!" she cried.



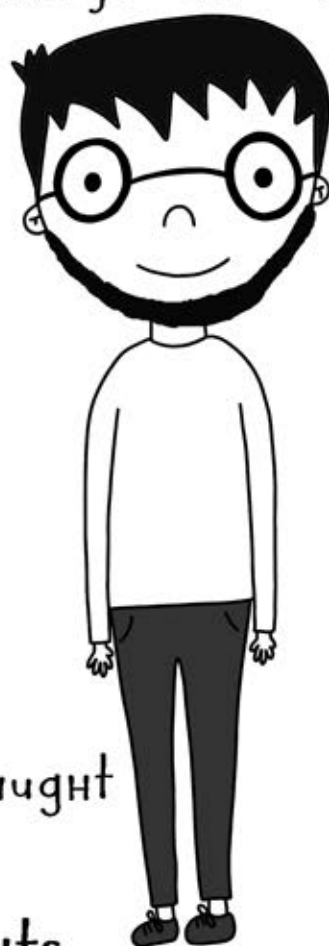
"They have gone to their homes in Paradise with Allah, sweetie. Allah tells us not to think of them as dead. They are alive in a way which we can't see and Allah is giving them all they need," Dad said.

I felt sick in my stomach, like I was going to throw up. I can't imagine humans doing this to each other. I went and sat closer to Mum, and she pulled my head towards her and stroked my hair. "I know it's hard to find out that terrible things like this happen in the world. But I want you to know that Allah gives them so much strength and He is with



them. Remember Musa's (as) story? When the Pharaoh's wife was being oppressed because she went against Him and believed in Allah, Allah comforted her by showing her her home in Paradise, and she smiled. Allah is always with the oppressed. And He knows what is best and how things will work out in the end," she said. 😊

Just then, Dad stood up enthusiastically, with a smile. A completely different mood. "I'll tell you what we can do!"



CHAPTER 5 - WHAT CAN WE DO?

Dad told us that as Muslims, we're taught to stand up for people who are being **oppressed**, that's people whose rights are being taken away and are being treated unfairly.

We should feel bad about it, no matter who the oppressed people are, Muslims, Jews, Christians, atheists - anyone. Like, when you see someone being bullied in the playground, there's a really uncomfortable feeling in your heart. You don't like it. It's horrible. And you wish you could do something to stop it.

That's why there have been peaceful protests in many countries around the world, to **SUPPORT PALESTINE** and show our governments that we want Israel to stop the **WAR CRIMES** and we want the **OCCUPATION TO END**.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been marching on the streets in their cities. Because most humans are good, and they can't stand by quietly and watch such a big injustice take place. Most humans know that violence like this doesn't solve anything. Most humans want it to end.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING - WHY DON'T ALL HUMANS WANT IT TO END?! I'M THINKING THE SAME.



Anyway, here's what you can do:

Firstly, and most importantly, you can **talk to Allah** from the heart. He is all **powerful, mighty, loving and just**. Ask Allah to help the oppressed, wherever they are. Ask Allah to send His miracles. Your duas are the most powerful thing you can do.

Other things to do:

- With your parents you can write to your government. This could be your local MP in the UK, or your

representatives and senators in the US, or whoever you can reach out to in the government. These are the people that can help decide what the leaders in our countries can do. It's like talking to your teacher when you see someone has been bullied for years and you want to help them.

• With your parents, you can go to a peaceful protest for Palestine. Imagine how the Palestinians feel when they hear of millions of people standing with them. It helps them to stay strong!



• Tell people what you've learnt here. Share this with them. We need EVERYONE to know about what's happening so they can also have the courage to stop what's happening, like you do!



• In the UK and the USA, wear a badge or sticker with the Palestinian flag, to show your support for the Palestinians, even when it's not on the news anymore. Check with your parents before wearing one to school. If you live in other countries, like France and Germany, ask your adults about wearing a flag. 😊

• Be creative - design and make keyrings, jewellery, t-shirts, paintings, mock-up Aqsa designs, or anything

you want, in support of Palestine and explaining what's happening. You could even sell them with some of the proceeds going to help Palestinians in Gaza and make a little pocket money in the process.



• Give money in **charity** to **Gaza**. Get creative with ways to raise money. You could get people to sponsor you for something, or auction some artwork!



You might have guessed. Nobody played cards! We packed them up and got to painting some awesome pictures of Al-Aqsa and the Palestinian flag. I'm selling mine for £800,000, the same number as the people of Palestine who lost their home country in 1948.

Let me know if you want to buy it? All the money is going to **Gaza**.

