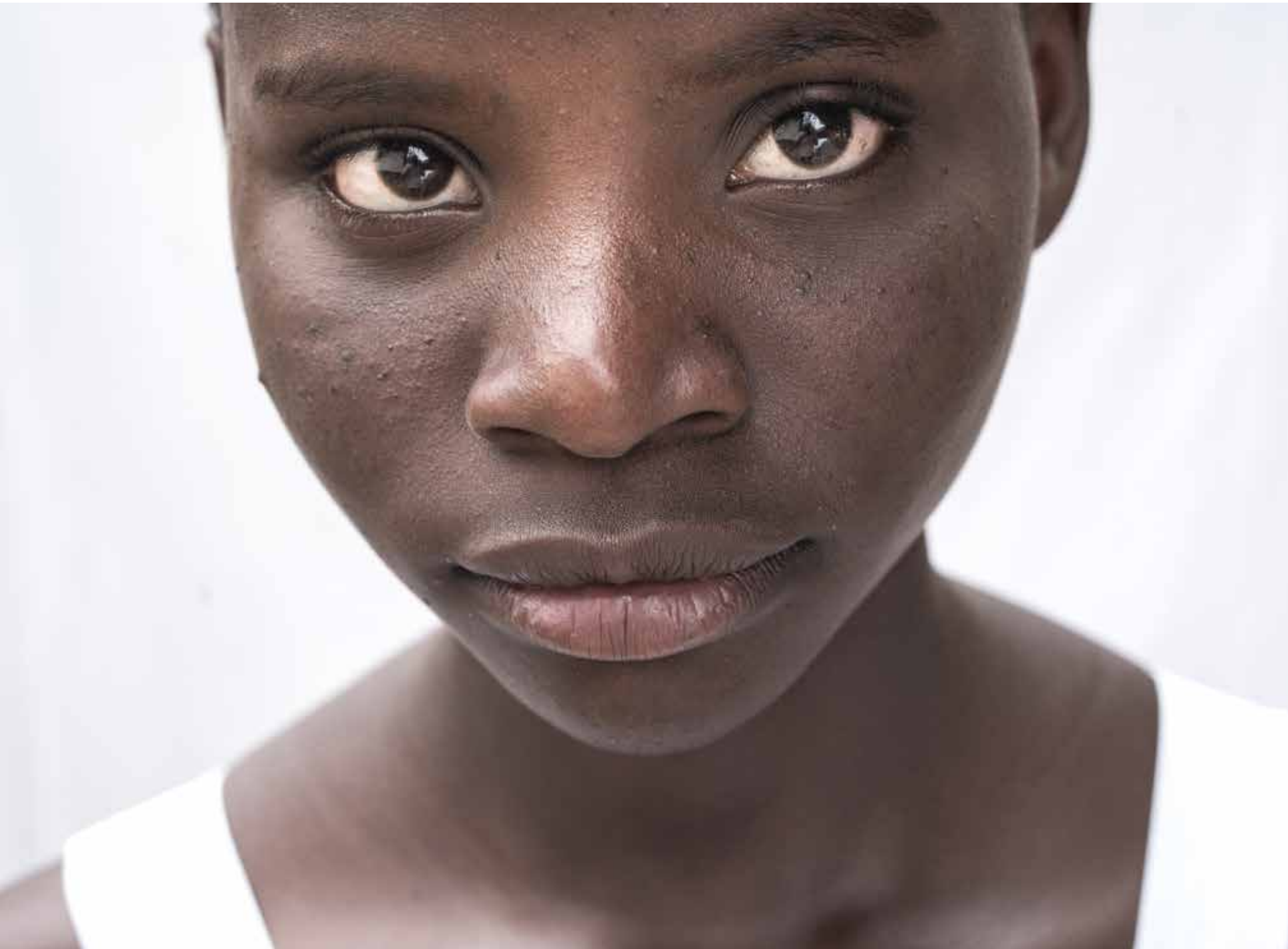


amos  trust
justice and hope for the forgotten

WORDS OF HOPE

THE NEWSPAPER FROM AMOS TRUST
SPRING 2020



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ON HER TERMS: One of the young women supported in Mwanza, Tanzania by Amos partner, Cheka Sana — January 2018. Photograph: © Amos Trust/Tom Merillion

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VIVA NICARAGUA: A Sandinista National Liberation Front flag flies outside Edwin's hut in Nancital, rural Nicaragua. Photograph: © Anthony Bullock



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Support for the Sandinista government is still strong in rural Nicaragua. Turn to page 11 to read Caroline Bone's report from the recent Amos trip.

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VINCEREMOS WORDS OF HOPE — EDITORIAL

WORDS Chris Rose

IN JANUARY, a friend who is very involved in campaigning for Palestinian rights asked me: “How do you keep going at Amos when each area of your work has so many challenges?” I found myself asking the same question in March when the full impact of the Covid-19 Coronavirus started to be felt.

As countries have sought to respond to this rapidly unfolding situation they have either failed to establish appropriate responses to, or have simply ignored, the needs of those our partners work with. This is not a huge surprise to us — we exist to proclaim justice and hope for the forgotten.

The final pages of this issue of WORDS OF HOPE provide an update on the latest developments from our partners. This will of course be out of date very quickly but we will endeavour to keep our Facebook Page current and send through regular updates. We are in frequent contact with all of them and they are so eager to hear our news. We know they are holding us in their thoughts and prayers.

Also in this issue, we have articles from a range of guest contributors and we are particularly delighted to welcome Omar Ghraieb from Gaza City. Over the next 18 months he will be a key contributor to our Ahlan Gaza campaign. His article is ‘hot off the press’ and provides a snapshot of how people in Gaza are responding to the threat of Covid-19.

Robert Cohen provides his analysis of Donald Trump’s ‘Vision for Peace,’ while Palestinian musician Samir Eskanda explains the importance of the Cultural Boycott and Guardian journalist Jessie McDonald writes about her experience of the Amies Freedom Choir performance at our Bethlehem carol service in London. We also have Karin reporting back from the On Her Terms summit that she ran with our partners in Tanzania, and Caroline Bone from our recent visit to Nicaragua.

In each of these articles we see the hope that shines a powerful spotlight on injustice and refuses to give it the final say. We saw this so impressively in the Nicaraguan communities that CEPAD has been working with over the last 5 years. One word has stayed in my mind since — the old Sandinista solidarity cry, VINCEREMOS — WE SHALL OVERCOME!



ABOVE
It's rare for a session run by Cheka Sana's youth workers not to be filled with laughter. The youth association groups meet with them weekly for more than a year, and are a key support system for young women on the streets. *Image: Christoph Stulz*

“I FEEL ALIVE AGAIN!”

Amos’ On Her Terms Lead **KARIN JOSEPH** reports from her recent visit to the Cheka Sana Foundation in Mwanza, Tanzania.

WORDS Karin Joseph PHOTOGRAPHY Tom Merilion and Christoph Stulz



“We’re teaching girls to be independent. Is there anything wrong with that? No. But in our society, we are raised to be dependent on a man, who in reality won’t be there all the time...” CATHERINE MONGELLA, CHEKA SANA'S DIRECTOR

Rain was pouring down outside as we savoured some sweet tea and strained to hear each other over the din. We reflected on the week we’d just spent together. One participant smiled and said, “I feel alive again!” The group nodded, agreed. It was late October 2019, and practitioners from Burundi, Tanzania and Kenya had gathered in Mwanza, Tanzania, for a week-long workshop to learn about Amos’ partner CHEKA SANA and their work with girls and young women on the street.

Their approach is having profound effects, combining group work, support with business training and self-defence sessions.

On our third day together, the female workshop participants accompanied Cheka Sana staff members, Nyangi and Revina, to the self-defence training. The two male practitioners in our workshop instead joined a session with Cheka Sana’s other outreach workers; self-defence at Cheka Sana is a fiercely-guarded female space. Self-defence training is a key part of Cheka Sana’s broader approach with young women on the streets. Emiliana, 21, who now runs her own business making children’s clothes after graduating from Cheka Sana’s youth association groups, explained:

“At first, I didn’t understand the point of the meetings or what was happening. But then I also joined the self-defence training, and girls from all the other groups, not just mine, started coming. After a few sessions I saw the value of what we were learning, in self-defence sessions and in the group. I became a leader. I helped our group to get past fights, and reach solutions. Because of Cheka Sana’s support, I can now have control over my own finances. I am a tailor. I especially love to make children’s dresses. I sell them all over Mwanza. I know that what Cheka Sana has helped me with, nobody can take away from me now.”

I have visited Cheka Sana before and have known of their work over several years, but it was during this visit that I really began to understand the radical edge to their approach.

Mwanza, is in the culturally conservative Lake Zone of Tanzania, where women are taught not to say no. The act of saying ‘hapana’ (“No”) is in itself a huge hurdle to overcome, even before they are encouraged to yell it out! As the weeks progress, girls

go from whispering it, what Nyangi calls a “tip-toe no”, to bellowing it. The physical training sessions are followed by group discussions with Nyangi, whom the girls trust deeply.

This relationship between Nyangi and the young women, built over countless hours of presence in their lives, during outreach work on the streets, in their youth association groups and then at their self-defence training each week, provides a safe space for them to build their confidence and make the changes they want.

Esther, one of Cheka Sana’s assistant trainers in self-defence, spoke about girls’ experiences on the streets. “They live in fear. Self-defence can change that reality — they can stand on their own two feet, be brave, if they don’t want something to happen, they can stand up for that. Yes, it’s about physical defence, but also girls emotionally defending themselves... knowing their own value.”

Nyangi and the rest of the team invited us along to learn about their youth association groups, which bring together young women aged 15-25 for a long-term process of group formation, life skills, leadership development and business training. Down the line, young women then get individualised support either to pursue vocational training, or access a small grant to kickstart a business, such as a market stall.

For Emiliana, the power of Cheka Sana’s work comes from the combination of what they offer young women. She reflected that without the self-defence sessions, she wouldn’t have believed she could succeed at her own business initiative.

Cheka Sana is run by executive director Catherine (pictured above), and her senior team, who are all women under the age of 35. Catherine explained to us why their work with young women is so countercultural. “We’re teaching girls to be independent. Is there anything wrong with that? No. But in our society, we are raised to be dependent on a man, who in reality won’t be there all the time...”

We don’t want to break relationships, don’t get me wrong. We just want them to be in relationships they want to be in. If you need to be with someone, that’s when they give away all the power — and we don’t want that for our girls. We’re not doing them justice for their future. We want them to experience equality. Our hope is that they understand the worth that we

see in them. They understand the potential we see in each of them. That they know we understand the struggles that they face as women.

“We work through a model of solutions-focussed approaches, which essentially, allows us to work with a girl on her terms. Based on what they want, not what we want, on how they think it’s best to solve their issue or problem — not from our “educated” perspective, but from their perspective whilst on the street. ‘So, if you don’t want to go home, darling, you don’t have to. What do you want to do? What can we do together to make sure that you’re safe? You tell me.’ It takes time, and patience, but once you see even one girl’s life changing, it gives enough fire and fuel to keep going.”

And for the practitioners themselves, our week in Mwanza with Catherine and her team was not only one of learning but also a time for rejuvenation and relationship-building: something not normally afforded practitioners. This could never be done in the same way in a brief online seminar or a one-day training.

One wonderful illustration of what can come of spending quality time with each other in regional settings like this, was when Teddy, programme director of New Generation Burundi visited a local Tanzanian organisation participating in the workshop, supporting female domestic workers. The Tanzanian team had by chance met a child domestic worker from Burundi. The staff were struggling to communicate with her, so Teddy assisted, speaking with her in their shared mother tongue of Kirundi and helping the team to develop a plan. They soon established that they in fact regularly meet girls from Burundi who have sought work in Mwanza, but lack the capacity to successfully trace their families back across the border. Now they’ve made contact, working together on future cases is all the more possible.

We went our separate ways in the knowledge that in Burundi, Kenya and Tanzania, there are friends in this work to reach out to, who know how hard this work is but also know its deep joys and long-term impact.

For more details about Cheka Sana and their work, please visit amostrust.org/cheka-sana-tanzania

AHLAN FROM GAZA!

Gazan journalist OMAR GHRAIEB writes exclusively for Amos Trust about life in the Gaza Strip and COVID-19.

WORDS Omar Ghraieb PHOTOGRAPHY Mark Kensett

BELOW
A young boy from Gaza City attending one of NECC's play sessions. NECC offers psychosocial support and vocational training to the young people of Gaza — the innocent victims of three wars since 2009 — giving them hope for the future.



LEFT
Gazan journalist and humanitarian worker, OMAR GHRAIB.
You can follow Omar on Twitter at @Omar_Gaza

“Thanks to Amos Trust and their constant support to Gaza through campaigns that tell compelling stories from the Strip, I can now use their platform to open for you a window into Gaza, giving you a taste of the reality of life on the ground here.”
OMAR GHRAIB

PALESTINE, March 2020 — Ahlan from Gaza! Greetings Dear Readers, from one of the hottest spots in the world, the Gaza Strip. What is known as an impoverished coastal enclave, densely populated and until recently was known as one of the few places that was corona-free — that was until two exogenous cases were detected. Now we have joined the global fight against this deadly virus, despite not being well equipped like other countries due to occupation and blockade, and with a fragile and lacking health system, but we will delve into that later on.

Let me introduce myself, my name is Omar and I am a Palestinian citizen journalist living in the Gaza Strip. I spent years in journalism and humanitarian work and I am here to take you on a unique journey. Thanks to Amos Trust and their constant support to Gaza through campaigns that tell compelling stories from the Strip, I can now use their platform to open for you a window into Gaza, giving you a taste of the reality of life on the ground here.

Gaza remained corona-free which was baffling the whole world since this virus is ubiquitously spreading everywhere. But then, two Palestinians coming from Pakistan caught a fever while in quarantine, they were immediately tested and turned out positive. Despite the lack of resources and a fragile health system, Gaza has managed to increase its quarantine centres including hotels, hospitals, schools and rooms that are under construction in Rafah at the southern end of the Strip. By the end of March, the Palestinian ministry of health reported 155 coronavirus cases in Palestine of which 12 are in Gaza, all in quarantine. The numbers will most probably increase with time as the virus progresses and more people are tested.

So what does that change? Nothing really. Gaza is no stranger to lockdowns, curfews, lack of resources or even a collapsing economy. After years of occupation, blockade and internal division, people here are very much adapting to the circumstances and different emergency stages. The Strip has survived several wars, invasions and decades-

long armed conflict. We have seen it all. We are programmed to adapt to any crisis and become immune to it.

If you walk though Gaza's streets, you will notice different characteristics. While some roads have high pavements and look fancy with big trees flailing on both sides trying to mask big villas and mansions behind them, other streets are narrow with broken roads and humble houses cramped next to each other to form a camp. No, not the kind of camp that you would send your kid to during summer — a refugee camp.

The streets may vary but no street is safe from destruction during assaults or air strikes. In war, all streets are equal and every street might be a target. What also brings those opposite streets together is the spirit of the people living on them. Big house, small house, or no house — the Palestinian spirit of steadfastness shines through no matter what.

Whatever street you decide to stroll through, you will find children laughing and playing around, making the best of whatever space they have — while parents and youth gather to sit in front of their houses to exchange conversations, smoke hookah, or play cards. Those scenes can be observed across the Gaza Strip, no matter how posh or basic the area is.

Judging from Gaza's history, it's only natural to feel a sense of death and misery that lingers among Gaza's streets after all the tragedies they have endured. But at the same time, you quickly feel the overpowering sense of hope, determination, strength, success and effervescence which is second nature to Gazans.

Gaza has a complexity that confuses. On one hand, it appears like any other city in the world but on the other, we are nothing like other cities. Our daily life routine includes power outages that we have adapted to, which can extend up to 12 hours each day. What we lack in our health system, economy and employment sectors, we make up for through our unwavering hunger for life, peace, justice and freedom. We might have nothing, yet we will

welcome you warmly and offer you our last piece of bread. We might be under bombardment yet we insist on life being normal and unaffected, somehow.

So, while the world goes on lockdown due to the fear of the Coronavirus, Gaza maintains its normal daily bustling life. Yes, it's wrong, I know — we need to take preventive measures and practice social distancing — but what do you expect from people who live in what is known as the biggest open air prison on earth, and who are subjected continuously to so many crises to the point where it has become second nature?

Unfortunately, (or fortunately), we lost our sense of fear and danger long ago due to becoming accustomed to it, which is why we aren't panicking. Lack of resources was never something unprecedented and most people here live under the poverty line and depend on UNRWA food aid, which is why we don't run to stock up and empty supermarkets. We take it one day at a time and hope for the best. This is wrong you say? Well, what other options do we have?

I recall how my colleague's 12-year old son looks at me in total carelessness — ignoring the dismay in his mom's eyes and told me: “I survived three wars and countless assaults on Gaza, and I am only 12. Do you think a virus scares me? No. I want to go out and play”. How can you convince this child that his health is in danger when danger was the highlight of his young years while growing up?

If anything, this pandemic teaches us the importance of togetherness and being united because our survival depends on it. So here I am — wishing you safety and health from Gaza and hoping we all meet again on the other side when this nightmare ends. Let's make the world a better place if we survive this, and let's all unite for justice. Until then, please take care. And stay home.

Omar will be a regular contributor to Amos' new Ahlan Gaza project. To find out more, please visit amostrust.org/ahlan-gaza



ABOVE
PEACESHAM
The word most often used in the document is “security”, except it’s always Israeli security and never Palestinian security that’s talked about.

BANISHING JUSTICE FROM THE HOLY LAND

If Donald Trump is re-elected President this November, then 2020 will become a defining year for Israel/Palestine. The ever shrinking space for justice will take another mighty contraction as the consequences of Trump’s ‘Vision for Peace’ start to play out. ROBERT COHEN writes.



ABOVE
A BRIGHTER FUTURE?
...there’s another word you won’t find in ‘Vision for Peace’ — and that’s Justice.

ORWELLIAN
The long delayed and much anticipated plan for the future of Israel/Palestine, or to give its full name, ‘Vision for Peace, Prosperity and a Brighter Future’, finally saw the TV lights of a White House launch party on the 28th January this year. The 180-page document turned out to be the perfect way to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the death of George Orwell, which had taken place a few days earlier. I’m thinking of the Orwell who wrote that “political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind”. Orwell, it turned out, had provided us with an accurate summary of what the Twittersphere soon dubbed Trump’s #peacesham.

Once upon a time, we spoke of violations of international law, disregard for United Nation’s Security Resolutions and on-going human rights abuses. But that was yesterday. Now, in the new political language of ‘Vision for Peace’, we are to speak only of “today’s realities” and the requirement to take a “pragmatic” and “realistic” approach. “Pragmatic” is of course a euphemism for might is right (or at least might is not wrong).

And so nowhere in ‘Vision for Peace’ will you find the words “Occupation” or “Settlements”. Instead it talks about “the portions of the West Bank with large Jewish populations”. But nowhere does it bother to mention how those Jewish populations got there or what’s happened to the Palestinians since they arrived. Here, Palestinian history isn’t just ignored, it disappears altogether.

In explaining the failures of past attempts to bring peace to the land, ‘Vision for Peace’ puts the blame on: “Palestinian divisions”, “Palestinian terrorism”, “failures of Palestinian leadership” and “poor Palestinian governance”. While these are certainly a part of what’s gone on, I could not find a single past or current failing attributed to the Israelis. No judgement has to be passed on Israel because no offence has been committed. The slate is wiped clean.

The word most often used in the document is “security”, except it’s always Israeli security and never Palestinian security that’s talked about. The Israeli NGO B’Tselem has been tracking Israeli and Palestinian casualties since September 2000. Up to the summer of 2014, for every 15 people killed 13 have been Palestinian. If you start counting from 2005 the figures are even more lopsided. In ‘Vision for Peace’ it looks like some lives matter, and some do not.

The security narrative is not the only lopsided telling of the story. Trump’s plan states that both Israel and the Palestinians will have to make “territorial compromises”. This is true. But reading through the document I struggled to see what Israel has to give up that it actually wants. Unless you think most Israelis could not bear to give up the possibility of sovereignty over Ramallah and Nablus. Meanwhile, the Palestinians lose 30% of the West Bank, including the agriculturally verdant Jordan Valley. Jerusalem would remain the united capital of the State of Israel. In return the Palestinians are given parcels of land bordering the Negev desert, described as future “industrial and residential zones” and three Palestinian majority towns currently in Israel would be moved into the new Palestinian State. It’s a strange understanding of “territorial compromise”.

Trump’s plan is presented as a “two state” solution to give the appearance of continuity with the previous quarter century of global diplomatic language. However, the proposed Palestinian State is one that does not control its own borders and relies on bridges and tunnels to create contiguous land. This is a novel definition of the word State. Isn’t “capitulation” a more accurate description of what’s really on offer to the Palestinians?

LESSON IN ETHICS
At this point we should set aside Orwell as our tutor in political language and replace him with Martin Luther King Jr for a lesson in ethics. That’s because there’s another word you won’t find in ‘Vision for Peace’ — and that’s Justice.

“I’m thinking of the Orwell who wrote that “political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind”. Orwell, it turned out, had provided us with an accurate summary of what the Twittersphere soon dubbed Trump’s #peacesham.”

In all of its political and economic proposals on how to bring peace to the Holy Land, the word justice is never used. Dr. King, whose annual memorial day in America had just passed, once observed “There can be no justice without peace and there can be no peace without justice”. We should hardly be surprised though that President Trump does not care to take lessons in ethics from Dr. King.

But of course the Holy Land is one place where justice can never be absent. In the Torah the word justice appears 48 times, most often in the book of Deuteronomy as Moses prepares the Israelites to enter the Promised Land. A favourite line of scripture for Martin Luther King appears later in the Hebrew bible, in the book of the Amos, with his prophetic vision of what good must look like: “let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream”. In Trump’s ‘Vision’, justice is banished and the “mighty stream” turns to desert.

The good news is that this #peacesham will never be enacted. The Palestinians have rightly rejected it out of hand. Except there is a problem. The Palestinian rejection, perhaps built into the whole Washington/Jerusalem strategy in the first place, will allow Israel to annex land allocated to it within the plan because Trump will argue that the Palestinians have forfeited the right to object. Closer to home, I fear the UK government, now fixated on securing post-Brexit trade deals, will put up little opposition to such a unilateral move.

Assuming that Trump wins in November and some kind of centre-right-wing coalition government continues to control the Israeli Knesset, we should expect to see moves towards annexation in the near future. And justice for the Palestinians, and all who call the Holy Land home, will be further away than ever.

Robert Cohen is an Amos trustee. His monthly blog ‘WRITING FROM THE EDGE’ can be found by visiting patheos.com

LITTLE SPACES OF HOPE

MORE THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS FROM AMOS TRUST

BELOW: A mural from the CENTRO CULTURAL BATAHOLA NORTE in Managua, Nicaragua.



“When I have finished, I’ll run my fingers along the borders, erase the sketch marks of the colonisers, until the globe is no longer a map, until the word ‘map’ is erased from history and the Earth returns to just being God’s canvas — ready to be adorned by tomorrow’s hands.”

A portion of ‘Atlas’ by ZENA KAZEME — taken from ‘LITTLE SPACES OF HOPE’

PHOTOGRAPH: © Amos Trust/Clive Horsman

LITTLE SPACES OF HOPE
A teaser download for Amos Trust’s forthcoming new book of poetry and creative writing, ‘Spaces of Hope’, due Summer 2020

DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE COPY NOW

We’ve compiled a new Climate Justice resource of poetry and creative writing called ‘LITTLE SPACES OF HOPE’. It’s a free download teaser to ‘SPACES OF HOPE’, which will be published this Summer as a follow up to 2016’s ‘WORDS OF HOPE’. Please sign up to receive our Enews at [AMOSTRUST.ORG/SIGN-UP](https://amostrust.org/sign-up) and we’ll be in touch with more details. In the meantime, to download your free copy of ‘LITTLE SPACES OF HOPE’, please visit amostrust.org/little-spaces-of-hope

CLIMATE JUSTICE

A SENSE OF HOPEFULNESS

CAROLINE BONE reports on the recent Amos trip to Nicaragua

WORDS Caroline Bone
PHOTOGRAPHY Mark Kensett

BELOW
WHERE THERE’S A WELL, THERE’S A WAY — one of the women from the village of Pochotal in Teustepe, Nicaragua practices water divining or ‘dowsing’.

In what seems like a whole lifetime away now, a group of nineteen of us travelled to NICARAGUA to catch up with some of the communities that Amos has been supporting these past 5 years through the work of our partner CEPAD. Some of us had been before and had seen what life was like at the start of their 5-year programme and then 3 years in — and others were new to the country.

In 2018, after the last Amos trip, the country suffered huge political unrest which impacted on all the communities in one way or another. CEPAD staff have had difficulty making visits and government funding for initiatives has been harder to get. The weather has also been less predictable as a consequence of climate change — no rain and then a whole year’s worth falling in just a few days — which further affected crops both large and small.

It is fair to say that those of us who had visited before were disappointed that some of the progress we had expected has been limited by these factors. We noted that communities were talking about climate change with great concern — something they had not referenced on our previous visits.

But just when, to our eyes, things seemed harder than ever... we were surprised; by the confidence of the women leaders, by young women who work hard to support other young people through health promotion and sports programmes, by a community who are in the process of receiving a grant from the government that will see their road completed allowing for the provision of electricity and then a water pump and by tales of school children being fed by a woman who has learned new cooking skills to make the most of the vegetables she harvests from the school garden.

Some of us travelled to the Cepana Farm School where farmers receive training on crucial techniques to combat the effects of climate change on their land. We saw the impact of re-forestation — where the planting of trees has helped increase the bio-diversity of the area and in this instance, attracted sloths and monkeys to the area!

We met Juan Carlos who developed the water filters now supplied to many families within the communities. It has a very simple design, using easily available hardware and natural materials to act as the filter. Provision of these low-cost filters has dramatically improved the health of families and we felt very pleased that Amos has particularly been able to support this.

We visited two communities who had worked with CEPAD on previous 5-year programmes and we could see what a difference their participation had made. There were flourishing crops, community-led committees that have been developing micro-hydroelectricity schemes, and a great sense of hopefulness that there are other opportunities and possibilities just around the corner. Being part of the CEPAD training and development programme had just been the start of all of this for them.

We look forward to hearing more positive stories from the communities who are accepted onto the next 5-year programme. Do please join us in supporting them.

You can stay in touch with our work in Nicaragua by signing up to receive our WORDS OF HOPE Enews. Simply visit amostrust.org/sign-up, click on the ‘SUBSCRIBE’ button and then ‘CLIMATE JUSTICE’.



CHEKA SANA TANZANIA

BUILDING THE POWER OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN ON THE STREET

PHOTOGRAPHY Christoph Stulz

BREAKING THE MOULD

Cheka Sana's staff start each session with young women with games to build relationships, nurture trust and encourage laughter.





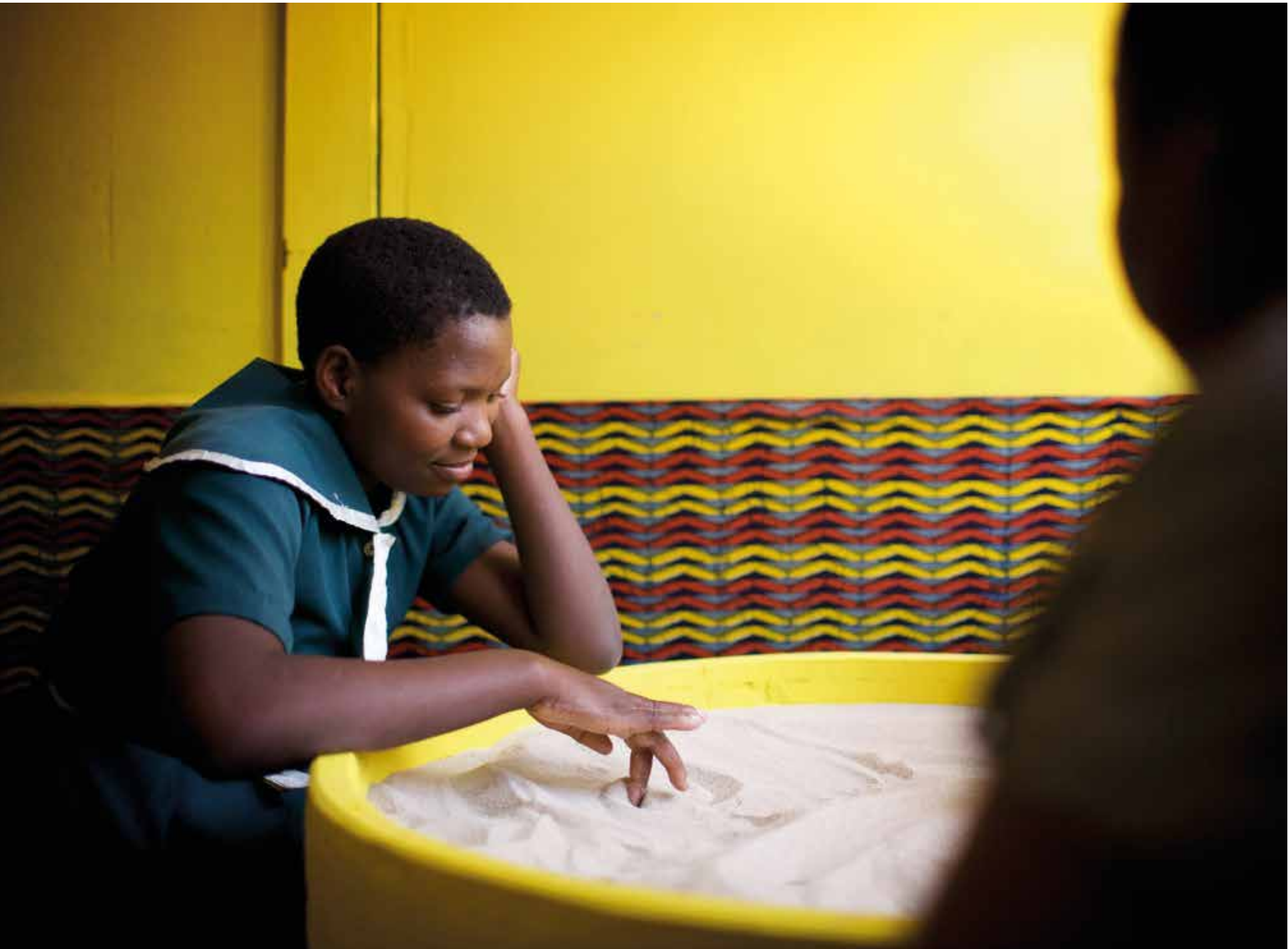
CHEKA SANA GALLERY

TRANSFORMING LIVES IN TANZANIA

IN BUSINESS TOGETHER

Two young women who now run their own clothing business laugh with Cheka Sana's youth workers. The youth association group process develops leadership, business and life skills and takes more than a year before they are ready to get started in entrepreneurship.

PHOTOGRAPHY:
© Amos Trust/Tom Merilion



PHOTOGRAPHY:
© Christoph Stulz

TOP
SHARING THROUGH PLAY
Cheka Sana's long-term approach with children centres on play therapy as a key way to help process their trauma and open up to their support workers. They hold one-to-one sessions in a beautiful light-filled room with books, art materials and sand to help children feel at ease.

For more details of Cheka Sana's work with girls and young women on the streets, please visit amotrue.org/cheka-sana-tanzania

BOTTOM LEFT
CIRLCES OF TRUST
Teamwork and developing peer support is a key element of Cheka Sana's youth association group model. Together, the young women choose where they want to meet each week, choose who will be the leaders and choose what business they want to pursue.

BOTTOM RIGHT
"HAPANA"
Self-defence sessions are run for the girls involved in all areas of Cheka Sana's work. It is central to their approach, building confidence and self-esteem over time amongst participants, helping them to find their voice and stand up for their own rights as young women.



ADWOA DICKSON
Amies Freedom Choir director and co-founder.

For more details about Amies Freedom Choir,
please visit pan-arts.net/projects/amies



AWE-INSPIRING AMIES FREEDOM CHOIR

Guardian journalist
Jessie McDonald
writes about a moving
performance.

WORDS Jessie McDonald
PHOTOGRAPHY Alecsandra Dragoi/The Guardian

Christmas already seems like a lifetime ago, but the messages from the Amos Trust carol service still ring true. Poetry, spoken word and songs on a range of topics: the climate crisis, racism, women's rights, the effects of austerity and Palestinian peaceful activism, have stayed with me. I think because they are topics that most carol services, certainly the ones that I have been to, don't touch on. But also because, working in journalism, they are stories that come up frequently, but which I rarely sit and listen to directly as a member of an audience. One of the most moving performances for me was by Amies Freedom Choir. I was struck by their beautiful floral head-dresses lined up against the huge festively-decorated trees in the background. When they started to sing, their voices hushed the entire 400-strong crowd — their voices were powerful, melodic and vibrated with emotion. It was only after the performance that I found out something that made Amies even more extraordinary — each member of the choir was a modern slavery survivor who had been trafficked to the UK, to be forced into either prostitution or domestic servitude. To have the confidence to stand up and sing in front of a large crowd having been through such traumatic experiences is truly awe-inspiring. I wanted to find out more about the choir, and Amos kindly put me in touch with Adwoa Dickson, who co-founded the project alongside Annabel Rook. I met Adwoa and we chatted about the effect the choir has on the women who take part. Adwoa told me that when some women first join the choir they don't even feel comfortable saying their name aloud to the group. That is the first thing they learn to do,

and something as simple as saying their name helps to reassert their identity and confidence. They then move onto practising songs, and eventually build up to performing, if they want to. Adwoa told me about some of the mental health benefits: focusing on breathing, learning good posture, and being present in the moment. They always share a meal before practice and there is a crèche so women with children are able to benefit from a couple of hours off. I spoke to one of the choir members, Racheal, and it was clear that the choir is more than just singing for her, it's a sisterhood where she feels safe. She told me the choir has helped her start to build a life in the UK and move on from the traumatic way she arrived here. She's now at university studying accounting, but still manages to fit in choir practice. I used these conversations as the basis for an article I wrote for the Guardian. It was a pleasure to write, but I think the most exciting part for the choir was meeting the photographer, Alecsandra Dragoi, who shot gorgeous portraits for the piece. Adwoa said the Amos Trust carol service was a highlight for the choir. It was for me too. It was refreshing to attend a festive event where the mic is passed to people who aren't often given a platform to speak and where a truly diverse range of people are welcome. And really what's more festive than that?

Jessie McDonald is a journalist with the Guardian. To read her Amies Freedom Choir article, please visit theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/17/were-bonded-like-sisters-the-choir-giving-trafficked-women-a-voice-amies-freedom-choir



COMPLICITY, NOT IDENTITY

Palestinian musician
Samir Eskanda writes
about why the cultural
boycott of Israel is vital
for the peaceful struggle
against Israeli apartheid.

WORDS Samir Eskanda

BELOW
ROGER WATERS — co-founder of the British progressive rock band
Pink Floyd.

The English composer and producer Brian Eno once said, “art is a powerful substance. It depends whose hands it gets into. There’s no reason why your art should survive that transition and not become a weapon in somebody else’s hand.”

Since 2004, Palestinian civil society has called for the cultural boycott of Israel, inspired by the international solidarity that helped end apartheid in South Africa where all progressive artists refused to perform lucrative shows, with few exceptions. But unlike the cultural boycott of apartheid South Africa, the Palestinian call for the cultural boycott of Israel, a key component of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement for Palestinian rights, targets institutions, not individuals. It targets complicity, not identity. Thousands of artists worldwide have publicly endorsed BDS and many thousands more quietly refuse offers from Israeli music venues, theatres, festivals and production companies. Any artist who does cross the peaceful Palestinian picket line, regardless of intentions, is used by Israel's far-right apartheid regime to whitewash, or artwash, and therefore perpetuate its system of oppression against Palestinians. A few British artists have learnt this the hard way. In playing Tel Aviv they were heartily endorsed by the Israeli foreign ministry and its embassies and lobby groups, just as grassroots groups like Artists for Palestine UK warned. Israel's international image has plummeted in recent years, including among young Jewish Americans, who have joined the BDS-supporting Jewish Voice for Peace en masse, revulsed at Israel's war crimes in besieged Gaza and the occupied

West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Some ask: why no boycott of the US, the UK, and other states violating international law and abusing human rights? Because boycotts are not a principle, but a tactic, employed when called for and judged effective by oppressed communities in their struggles for freedom and justice. The overwhelming majority of Palestinian civil society has called for boycott, divestments and sanctions against Israel's apartheid regime as well as against corporations and institutions, including cultural institutions, implicated in its grave human rights violations. International artists are not the only ones to have vocalised their support for BDS. More than a thousand citizens of Israel, mostly Jewish, have endorsed the Israeli group Boycott from Within, recognising the urgent need to isolate Israel's apartheid regime through boycotts. South African MP Mandla Mandela, Nelson's grandson, wrote last year of “the eerie similarities between Israel's racial laws and policies towards Palestinians, and the architecture of apartheid in South Africa. We South Africans know apartheid when we see it.” In this context, every conscientious person has an ethical duty to do no harm to the nonviolent Palestinian struggle for justice. For artists, that means, at the very least, refusing to allow your art to become a weapon in somebody else's hand.



WHICH BRITISH ARTISTS ARE SUPPORTING BDS?

British artists who have made their support for BDS public include musicians Roger Waters (*pictured*), Portishead and Kate Tempest, and directors Ken Loach, Peter Kosminsky and Mike Leigh. Actors include Miriam Margolyes, Riz Ahmed and David Calder amongst others.



EL PRESIDENTE DIEUDONNÉ RUNS FOR OFFICE

WORDS Chris Rose
PHOTOGRAPHY Rebekah McKay-Smith

ABOVE
“I am running for President because after 20 years, the young people trained through New Generation are now starting to stand in decision-making positions in Burundi.” DIEUDONNÉ NAHIMANA

When Dieudonné told us 18 months ago that he was seriously considering running in this year’s Burundian presidential election, it didn’t come as a great surprise. The purpose of NEW GENERATION, from the beginning, has been to develop a new generation of leaders for Burundi; and if anyone is going to stand who represents this ideal and has the integrity necessary to provide a vision of a new reconciled Burundi, it’s Dieudonné. His experience has given him a depth of personality and character to be able to denounce corruption and capture the youth votes.

His story is remarkable. His father and 16 members of his family were murdered in the genocide that broke out in 1993. He was forced onto the streets where he started to care for and galvanise the other children he found there. And it was on the streets that he himself found the personal faith that has motivated him ever since.

He founded New Generation in 1999, not only to work with and provide opportunities for children on the streets, but also to train them to be a new generation of leaders — in the belief that ‘the least shall be first’. This model spread throughout Burundi via the New Generation Clubs (a number of which still exist), and which could provide a groundswell of support that Dieudonné is hoping to capture.

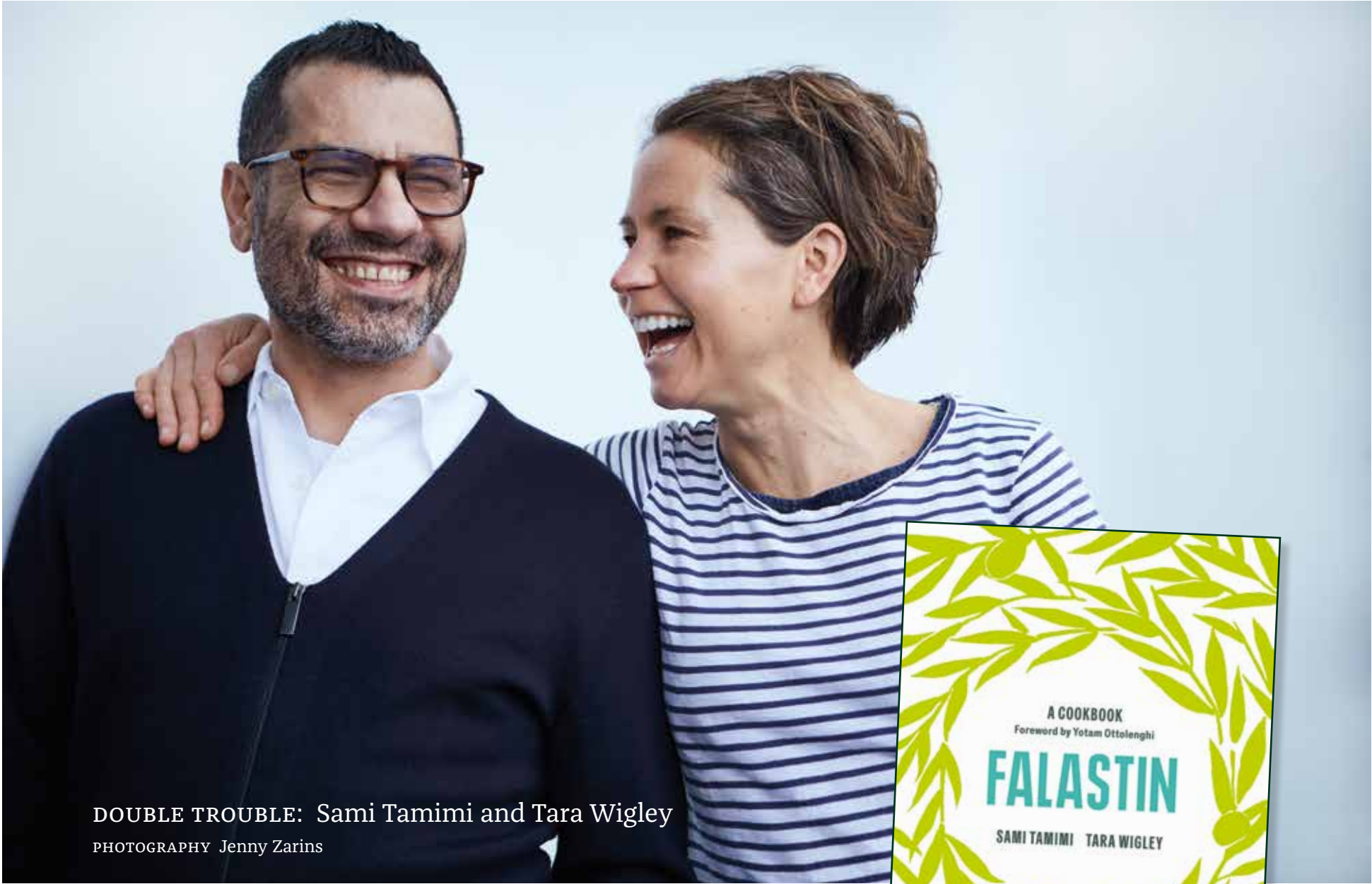
“I am running for President because after 20 years, the young people trained through New Generation are now starting to stand in decision-making positions in Burundi. As the person who has trained them, I realise I have what is required to bring reconciliation in this country; to bring unity between the different ethnic groups and the hope of a Burundi that is better than the Burundi that we’ve seen in the past.

These young adults asked me to run as a candidate and the election committee has recognised me as one of two independent candidates. They have seen that I have what this country needs to bring reconciliation and development.”

New Generation has restructured with Kevin Ndikuriyo, (who has worked within New Generation for the last 5 years), now appointed National Coordinator with responsibility for the running and ongoing development of New Generation; Dieudonné will continue to be involved with international partners and Teddy Claude Harushimana is remaining as Programme Coordinator in a slightly more wide-ranging role. I will give Teddy the last word:

“Of course I will vote for Dieudonné because I know him and I know his heart is for his people, for bringing reconciliation and for giving a new generation a chance. If you look at the history of Burundi, there is no logical way that Dieudonné will win, but I think he has a chance because Burundi is different today. I think he will win in Bujumbura but that is only 5-10% of the vote. It is ‘up country’ where it will be decided and that is very different. There the government controls large areas and is still shutting down opposition.” The election is still scheduled for 20th May with the result being announced on 30th May.

At the time of writing, Burundi had had no confirmed cases of Covid-19 and the election is still scheduled for 20th May with the result being announced on 30th May.



FALASTIN A COOK BOOK

SAMI TAMIMI & TARA WIGLEY — FOREWARD BY YOTAM OTTOLENGHI

A ground-breaking and modern Middle Eastern cookbook, FALASTIN is a love letter to a place and its people. From Ottolenghi co-founder, Sami Tamimi and co-collaborator Tara Wigley, this is an evocative collection of over 110 unforgettable recipes written for the busy home cook and stories that will make you want to find out more.

With stunning food and travel photography from Jenny Zarins plus stories from unheard Palestinian voices, this important cookbook will transport you to the lands of Palestine.

To order your copy, please visit wordery.com and search FALASTIN.



For up to date listings of all Amos’ trips and events, please visit amostrust.org

AMOS TRAVEL AND EVENTS

AN UPDATE

WORDS Chris Rose
PHOTOGRAPHY Mark Kensett

ABOVE
Gilberto Aguirre from CEPAD and Katie Hagley from AMOS TRUST chatting together in Granada on the last night of our recent trip to Nicaragua.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 Coronavirus has led to us cancelling all of our activities until the Autumn. We are looking to restart our programme of activities with our annual Amos Day on Saturday 26th September at the Amnesty International Centre in London.

This year we will be welcoming, as a key speaker, Ambassador Dr Husam Zomlot, Head of the Palestinian Mission to the UK. Born in a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, Ambassador Zomlot previously served as the Palestinian Envoy to the US before the closure of the PLO Office in Washington DC instigated by President Trump in 2018.

We are also delighted to announce that the afternoon will be given over to a special tribute concert for Garth Hewitt. We are inviting guest artists and contributors to join us for a celebration of his career and its impact on so many of us. And of course, he will also be performing as part of the celebration. We will also be previewing new films from our Climate Justice campaign and our On Her Terms work in Burundi.

We are very keen to resume our trips as soon as it is safe and practical to do so, as they are a key way for us to stand in solidarity with our partners around the world. We have however, faced the dilemma of wondering whether the environmental cost of making such visits to our partners is now too high? Dennis, CEPAD’s Climate Change Lead, made it clear how our partners in Nicaragua, one of the countries most affected by climate change, see this.

“You must come. It is so important. Yes there is the environmental impact of flying here, but if you do

not come then how will you learn the real impact of climate change and how we are working together to respond? If you do not come, then these communities will never know that people elsewhere care or see their lives as part of a larger world. You have to do much more about your emissions, burn less fossil fuels, use renewables, pressure government and big businesses to change. You must make sure that flights are full when they fly, invest in reforestation and lots more. But not coming is not the answer. These are the flights you must make.”

We are particularly keen to restart our visits to Palestine as the outbreak has further escalated the immense challenges faced by our friends and partners there. We have rearranged dates and now have four trips planned to Palestine this Autumn. We are open for bookings for Walk The West Bank, the Palestine Experience and Ride Palestine trips and are operating a waiting list for Taste of Palestine, as this trip is currently sold out.

We also hope that the Sawbona trip to South Africa will take place in August but we have no idea how the next months will play out and if it will be appropriate to visit then.

Obviously, the safety and wellbeing of all those involved in our trips and activities is of the greatest concern to us and we do not know how the situation will develop. Should we need to cancel or postpone these dates we will not hesitate to do so.

For up to date listings of all Amos’ trips and events, please visit amostrust.org

AMOS LISTINGS

2020

AMOS TRUST events and trips are open to everyone. Join us as we challenge injustice, build hope and create positive change. Full details can be found on our website at amostrust.org



7 – 16 October 2020
A TASTE OF PALESTINE CULINARY TOUR
amostrust.org/taste-of-palestine-2020

An amazing 10-day trip with our friends at Zaytoun based in the kitchens, restaurants, and markets of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Sebastia, and Nazareth.



October – December 2020
WOMEN 4 WOMEN FUNDRAISER FOR GAZA
amostrust.org/women-4-women-2020

We are asking women around the UK to do something they love doing to raise awareness and vital funds to support the women of Gaza City. What will you do?.



9 – 20 August 2020
SAWUBONA SOUTH AFRICA
amostrust.org/south-africa-2020

Join us for an unforgettable trip to South Africa. Visit Umthombo’s vital work with children and young people living on Durban’s streets.



27 October – 7 November 2020
WALK THE WEST BANK
amostrust.org/walk-the-west-bank-2020

Three years after the end of Just Walk to Jerusalem, Holy Land Trust and Siraaaj Centre are offering a chance to Walk from Jenin to Jericho along Masar Ibrahim trail. Join us this Autumn but be quick — this trip will sell out.



7 – 14 November 2020
RIDE PALESTINE
amostrust.org/ride-palestine-2020

Solidarity begins on a bike. Freedom of movement is a right that Palestinians are denied. We are running our third Ride Palestine trip in 2020. So grab your bike for an incredible ride.



26 September 2020
ALL OUR WORLDS AMOS DAY 2020
amostrust.org/amos-day-2020

Join us for Amos Day 2020 which is back at Amnesty International’s HQ in Shoreditch, London, where this year we’ll be joined by some very special guests!



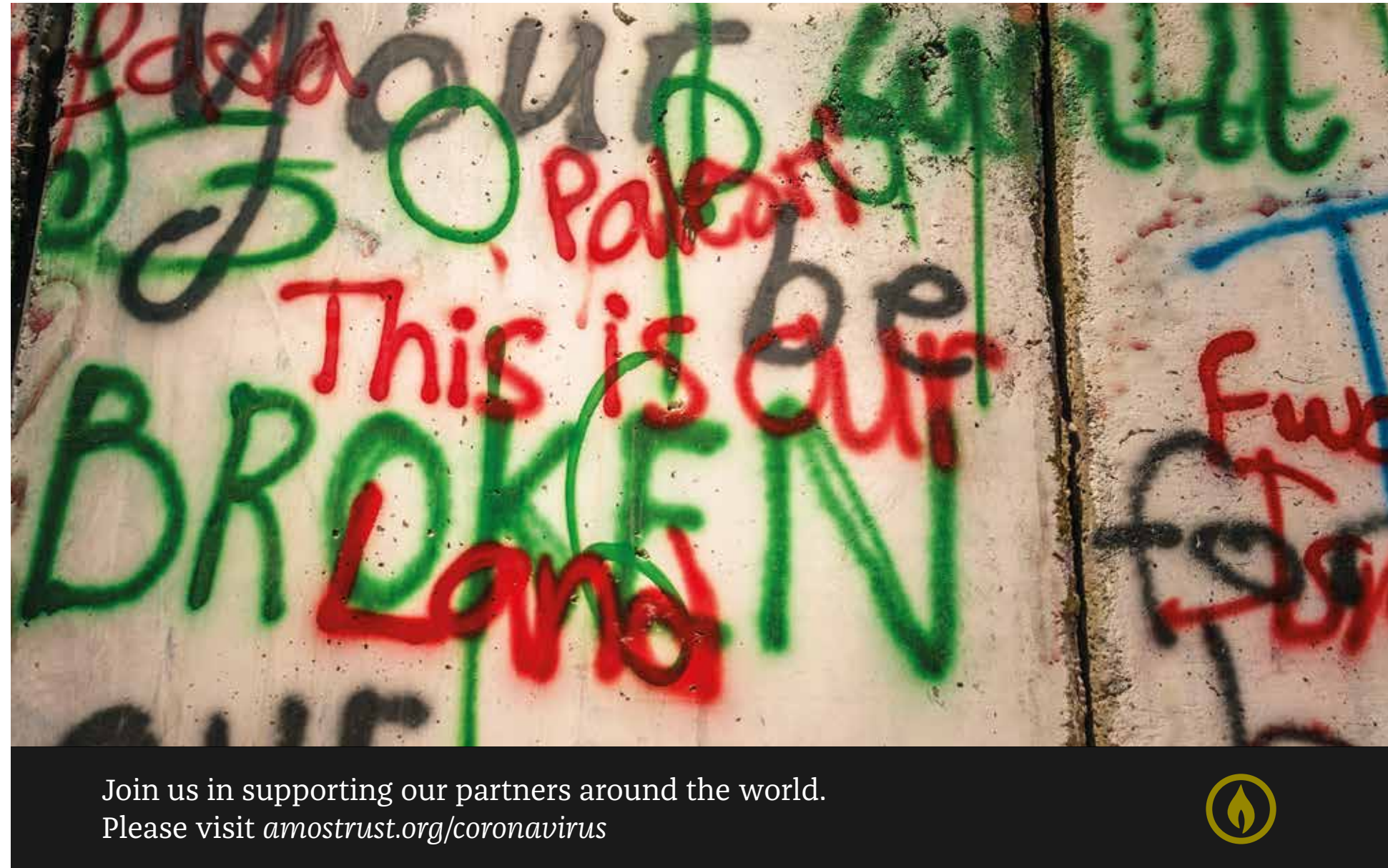
27 October – 7 November 2020
PALESTINE ALTERNATIVE PILGRIMAGE
amostrust.org/alternative-pilgrimage-2020

Visit some of the historic Holy sights including the amazing Greek Orthodox Church of the Twelve Apostles in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee.



December 2020
AMOS BETHLEHEM CAROLS TOUR 2020
amostrust.org/christmas-2020

Join us for a series of very special Advent carol services this December. All proceeds from these services will go towards Amos’ Christmas Appeal for our work in Palestine.



Join us in supporting our partners around the world.
Please visit amostrust.org/coronavirus



CORONAVIRUS OUR RESPONSE

PLEASE GIVE NOW

The impact of COVID-19 on everyone here at Amos Trust pales into insignificance compared to the situations our partners are dealing with. As you may have seen, the Coronavirus has already led to Bethlehem being placed in quarantine for 30 days, and to the closure of large parts of the West Bank. Similarly, we are aware of the impact upon our partners in Nicaragua. Since the unrest in 2018, they have had a very difficult two years with tourist groups from the USA cancelling their trips.

Please help us support our partners at this extremely challenging time by supporting our Coronavirus Appeal. Please visit amostrust.org/coronavirus

**AMOS
TRUST.
ORG**



CORONAVIRUS APPEAL UPDATE 3 APRIL 2020

WORDS Chris Rose
PHOTOGRAPHY Mark Kensett

We launched our Coronavirus Appeal in mid-march with an urgent call to support our partners in Bethlehem as the city went into a month-long lock down. Bethlehem is a city dependant on tourism, many rely on daily casual work and have gone a month now without income. A very high proportion of Palestinians are already heavily in debt due to the ongoing struggles of living under a military occupation and are now feeling the pressure ramp up to unsustainable levels

We strongly believe that our partners on the ground are best placed to respond and we are, at this time, seeking to secure as much support for them as possible.

We sent our first funds through to our three partners there, to use as they saw fit. For HOLY LAND TRUST and WI'AM that means food parcels and support for people in Bethlehem and the neighbouring Beit Sahour; for ALROWWAD that has meant support for those living in Aida Refugee camp — where conditions are even harder.

At the time of writing we have heard of the first 12 cases in Gaza which have all been amongst those quarantined after returning home. We have received extensive plans and updates from our partners AL AHLI HOSPITAL and NECC on how they seek to respond through their hospital, local community medical clinics and therapeutic programmes.

After 12 years of blockade, Gaza is densely over-populated. The economy is on its knees, unemployment is among the highest in the world and over 70% are dependant on food aid. The health services are already dangerously over-stretched and many drugs are at zero stock levels. If the virus starts

to spread through the population then the impact will be catastrophic.

We have joined with all those supporting programmes in Gaza to call on the Israelis to lift the restrictions placed upon Gaza and to highlight how the services we rely on are routinely denied them.

Our On Her Terms partners face very different challenges. India has declared a lockdown until 19th April. KARUNALAYA's two accommodation blocks (for boys and girls), are both full and staff are either staying on site or struggling to get in to support the children. For those in pavement-dwelling communities, who lack any shelter, it is incredibly hard — they rely on casual daily labour, which is now impossible. The public toilets they need to use have been locked and no provision has yet been made for them to receive emergency food aid.

In Durban, the streets are being patrolled by the military and a large emergency shelter has been set up in the Moses Mabhida football stadium car park for all those living on the streets. People have, after initial delays, been segregated into separate camps for males and females. The children are reporting that the conditions in them are dreadful, with little food,

no washing facilities and no safe spaces and that they are being sent back onto the streets during the daytime. Children are now running away from them and our partner UMTOMBO is looking at how it can provide food and support to these highly vulnerable children and young people who have been left to fend for themselves in abandoned buildings.

In Tanzania, CHEKA SANA has had to close all of their programmes. A skeleton outreach team has been going out on to the streets and they are looking at ways to further develop this response. At this time Burundi and Nicaragua remain largely unaffected by the virus — but we are aware this may well change.

We recognise acutely the difficulties that so many of us face at this time. We do ask that you give what you can to our Coronavirus Appeal as our partners will desperately need our support. But, we also ask that you hold all these people in your thoughts and your prayers, as we know that they are holding us in theirs.

We can't help our partners without your help. To support our Coronavirus Appeal, please visit amostrust.org/coronavirus

SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO REMEMBER THE RESOURCES WE CARRY WITH US.

A PORTABLE PARADISE — ROGER ROBINSON

And if I speak of Paradise,
then I'm speaking of my grandmother
who told me to carry it always
on my person, concealed, so
no one else would know but me.
That way they can't steal it, she'd say.
And if life puts you under pressure,
trace its ridges in your pocket,
smell its piney scent on your handkerchief,
hum its anthem under your breath.
And if your stresses are sustained and daily,
get yourself to an empty room – be it hotel,
hostel or hovel – find a lamp
and empty your paradise onto a desk:
your white sands, green hills and fresh fish.
Shine the lamp on it like the fresh hope
of morning, and keep staring at it till you sleep.

ROGER ROBINSON WAS THE
2019 TS ELLIOT PRIZE WINNER

#SEEDSOFHOPe



JUSTICE & HOPE FOR THE FORGOTTEN