

LATEST NEWS # 357, July 12, 2006

The following news concerns the West Bank.

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Anti-drugs day brings Bible Society into heart of Ramallah

WEST BANK — Around 600 people gathered in the heart of Ramallah recently to make a public demonstration against the rising tide of drug abuse, addiction and associated crime. Among them were staff from the Palestinian Bible Society, whose presence sent out a clear message that the Bible Society is standing firmly alongside the people of this troubled region.

At the invitation of the Palestinian National Authority's Anti-Drugs Department, three of the Bible Society's major projects – *East Nablus*, *Youth Resource* and *Operation Palestinian Child and Youth* – sponsored the anti-drugs day on June 26. Its partners were the Red Crescent and the Anti-Drugs Movement. "Our relationship with the Anti-Drugs Department, which started a couple of months ago, has become a wide open door to reaching out to many Palestinians and to building relationships with all sectors of society," says the Bible Society.

After gathering in Almanara Square, the crowds marched to the Palestinian Legislative Council building, where they sang anti-drugs songs. They were flanked by large banners bearing the text 'Addiction humiliates and disqualifies' and 'Addiction buries the life of man' and featuring the Bible Society logo. Bible Society staff also distributed 250 T-shirts, 1,000 brochures and 1,000 stickers carrying anti-drugs and anti-smoking messages.

Members of the Bible Society team were then interviewed by the local media. "We were asked why a Bible Society would participate in such event," says the Bible Society. "We explained that we are here for the people and that we care for them. Our aim in Bir Zeit [where the *Living Stones* student centre is based] is to develop young people. We know that drugs are one of the obstacles to development."

Later they reflected on the day's events. "All in all, this was a great day. For the first time we were in the heart of the struggle, holding people's hands and marching with them as we supported their rights and proved to them that we are part of this community.

"We would like to thank all those who prayed for this day."

For an earlier report about this event, see Latest News #355. (344 words – WEST BANK.12.07.06)



Photos (Palestinian Bible Society):

WBK06DJ-4: A banner bearing an anti-drugs message and the Palestinian Bible Society's logo being carried at an anti-drugs day in Ramallah on June 26, 2006.

WBK06DJ-5: A member of the Palestinian Bible Society team distributing a sticker during an anti-drugs day in Ramallah on June 26, 2006.

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