

Ecumenical Accompaniers – role description and skills and qualities needed



Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

Ecumenical Accompaniers are **human rights monitors**. We call them EAs for short.

What EAs do

- Being an EA begins with doing background reading, which we provide, and completing some assignments. This may take several weekends to complete.
- Next, there is a two-week residential preparation period in the UK.
- EAs then spend 3 months in Palestine, living and working in small international teams in the West Bank. While they are there, they:
 - witness and report violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.
 - where possible offer protection through being present themselves in a nonviolent way, which can sometimes deter violence and human rights abuses.
 - support nonviolent resistance by Palestinians and Israelis.
 - stand in solidarity with all those struggling nonviolently to end the occupation.
 - witness and share in daily life under military occupation.
 - build relationships with Palestinians and Israelis, which will further the programme's work, and learn about a variety of Israeli and Palestinian viewpoints.
 - report frequently and extensively about their activities, and on incidents of violence and human rights abuses.
 - write about the stories of people they meet for publication on our website, social media and elsewhere.
 - work alongside vulnerable adults and children (requiring a criminal record check).
- After EAs come back from Palestine, there is a two- or three-week rest period, then a four- or five-day residential Advocacy and Debrief week which allows them to prepare for their advocacy and debrief their time away.
- EAs then go on to undertake a period of advocacy sharing their witness and EAPPI's key messages and policy asks. They fit this around their other commitments. During this advocacy period EAs:
 - set up/organise and give a minimum of ten speaking engagements in their local communities and networks
 - meet with politicians and faith leaders
 - engage with local media.

Inclusion and diversity

EAPPI stands against all forms of discrimination and prejudice including, but not limited to, antiblackness, antisemitism, classism, homophobia, islamophobia, racism and sexism, with an understanding that these are often overlapping.

We want to build an inclusive and diverse network of EAs and particularly welcome applications from those usually under-represented as EAs, particularly people from Black communities, People of Colour, and those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Applicants from these groups who meet the minimum requirements for the role (below) are guaranteed an interview.

EAPPI is a church programme but is open to all and there is no requirement to be Christian or involved in a church. We welcome applications from people of all faiths and none.

EAs are not paid but they do receive a living allowance for their time in I-oP and their training and travel expenses are paid. We recognise that although we seek to cover all expenses because we cannot also give a 'wage', it makes service as an EA very difficult for some people, particularly those with caring responsibilities and those without financial stability. We regret that our current funding does not allow us to change this.

The programme is accessible for some but not all people with disabilities. Safety requirements mean it must be possible to correct your hearing to a level which allows you to hear clearly in crowded and noisy group situations, and if needed you must be able to run away from danger. Unfortunately, due to the environments EAs work in it is not possible for wheelchair users to serve. The work is physically and emotionally demanding and may involve standing for long periods, walking long distances, and witnessing distressing scenes (see 'Risks and difficulties of the role' below). If you have a disability and are not sure if the programme would be accessible for you, please contact us to discuss this.

The age range to take part is approximately 25-70 years.

You must reside in the UK or Ireland long term to apply through our offices in order to carry out the advocacy in your networks in these countries. Interested people who live in other countries must apply through their own country office. Further information is available from: media@wcc-coe.org.

Personal responsibilities

EAs must:

- respect the ecumenical nature of EAPPI as it reflects its Christian heritage, as well as the other faiths they will work alongside in Israel and occupied Palestine (I&oP).
- undertake their work from an anti-oppressive perspective, including examining their own position and role in relation to their teammates and Palestinians and Israelis they work with.
- undertake their advocacy from an anti-oppressive perspective, including actively standing against antisemitism.
- respect local cultural norms and practices and commit to refraining from engaging in behaviour that could be perceived as provocative or disrespectful.
- conform to EAPPI procedures and methods both in I&oP and in the UK and Ireland as defined in the contract.
- comply with the EAPPI Code of Conduct including as it pertains to security advice, orders to evacuate when necessary and generally taking the advice of local staff.

- maintain regular contact and communication with their EAPPI team and the EAPPI Local Programme Coordinator on personal location and activities.
- provide timely and detailed reports on their own and their team's activities, and on incidents they have observed.
- engage in mandatory programmed sessions for training, briefing and orientation purposes both in the UK and in I&oP.
- act from a focused, nonviolent, peace-seeking personal centre.
- follow the security advice provided by the EAPPI Local Programme Coordinator and local contacts, and refrain from taking unnecessary risks, which would endanger their own or others' life and health or bring the Programme into disrepute.
- acknowledge the risks inherent in this situation of conflict and take ultimate responsibility for personal safety and security by signing the 'Statement of Indemnity'.

Experience/skills and qualities needed

Essential experience/skills (these are the minimum requirements used for shortlisting for interview)

- Active involvement in community networks in the UK and/or Ireland. These could be related to your local area, interests, faith, work or any other communities you are connected to.
- Knowledge of and interest in the Middle East region and the conflict in I&oP.
- Experience of living/working in a different cultural context and an understanding of the need for sensitivity to the region's cultures. This does not mean you have to have lived abroad, as we also value experience of living or working in different cultural contexts in the UK or Ireland.
- Awareness of dynamics of power and privilege and colonialism and how these can impact the work of an international team.
- Experience of being in a non-hierarchical team, working cooperatively, being adaptable and self-motivated and working within specific guidelines.
- Experience in advocacy work, for example, public speaking, lobbying faith leaders and political representative(s), advocating for yourself or others in your community.

Essential qualities (these will be assessed at interview and throughout the preparation period)

- Maturity, psychological stability, flexibility and ability to cope with stressful/critical situations and changing circumstances.
- Willingness to develop relationships with both Palestinians and Israelis and an understanding of why this is crucial to the work.
- A commitment to engage constructively with people in authority and stay calm when provoked.
- A commitment to the principles of peace, nonviolence and reconciliation as a way of life.
- A commitment to actively opposing antisemitism in advocacy for peace and justice in Israel and occupied-Palestine.
- Respect for and willingness to participate in a variety of religious ceremonies, and respect towards the church-based character of the programme.

- Strong organizational abilities.

Essential competencies (these will not be used for shortlisting for interview, but if you are appointed and do not have these competencies, you will need to develop them)

- Competence in using smart phones and laptops including competent use of Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, Excel, the internet and private intranets, email, messaging apps and cloud-based file sharing applications (we use Onedrive and Microsoft Teams).
- Excellent communication skills in English, both written and spoken, and an ability to report in writing in a clear, accurate and timely manner.

Desirable experience/skills

- Nonviolent direct action and community organising/solidarity work.
- Competence in photography or video.
- Research and reporting on human rights and/or development work.
- Knowledge of Arabic (especially Levantine Arabic) and/or Hebrew.

Support for EAs of Colour

We recognise that EAs of Colour may face particular barriers in their service as an EA, for example encountering racism from EAs in their training group before they travel, and from team members and others they work with while in I&OP. We aim to prevent this to the best of our ability and to support EAs of Colour when it does occur. We are working to incorporate an anti-oppression perspective throughout our training and to support white EAs to understand their own white privilege and to act from a place of awareness of this.

Due to racial profiling at the Israeli border, there is an increased risk that EAs of Colour will experience extended questioning on entry to Israel or difficulties obtaining a visa, or in the worst case, being denied entry and deported. We aim to reduce this risk as much as possible through individual support to EAs of Colour with the process of airport entry. In the worst-case scenario that any EA is denied entry and deported, we aim to support the EA as best we can, to make sense of the experience and to help them find alternative voluntary work if this is possible and wished for.

A person of Colour can be an effective EA in Palestine. Despite possible difficulties outlined above we have seen how a person's obvious 'international' or 'tourist' status can enable that person to witness and report or offer protection no matter the colour their skin. There are EAs from all over the world in the international teams, including from Latin America and South Africa. There are often additional benefits that EAs of Colour, or EAs from the Global South, can bring to the role.

Risks and difficulties of the role

Please note the following, which will help you decide if this work is for you or not.

- Close family and friends can worry about EAs in I-oP. Make sure you have their full support.

- EAs live in a conflict zone but have to maintain what we call 'principled impartiality'. This means you must be committed to principles of human rights and international law above any desire to support one side over another.
- Living conditions in occupied Palestine can be simple and special diets may be difficult to maintain.
- EAs are placed in small international teams and have to live and work together under stressful conditions for three months. You will have to share a bedroom with another person and private space is difficult to find.
- EAs who thrive are typically those who are flexible, self-aware, able to ask for help, able to take criticism and advice, and who have a 'can-do' approach.
- It is not permitted for EAs to drink alcohol while they are on duty in their placements. This means you will not be able to have an alcoholic drink for extended periods during your service in occupied-Palestine and Israel.
- The work is physically demanding. You may stand for long periods of time at checkpoints, walk long distances over rough terrain and get up before dawn for duties.
- In a crisis situation you may have to leave an area very quickly; this means you need to be able to run at full pelt for several minutes over uneven ground.
- Very good hearing is vital for keeping safe. This includes being able to hear clearly in crowded and noisy group situations.
- The work can be emotionally draining and put you under considerable mental stress and you may not have access to your usual support systems and strategies. For this reason, the capacity to emotionally self-regulate is essential, as it will help you to make rational decisions in high pressure environments and mitigate negative emotions that can cloud judgement or escalate interpersonal conflict.
- For your own safety it is important to fully disclose physical and mental health issues. Failure to declare health issues that then prevent you completing your duties may result in you being sent home.
- Access to medical facilities is generally good but varies depending on your placement. Being frank about your health once you have been selected is vital for our colleagues in Jerusalem to place you appropriately.

These issues are raised here not only so that you can consider them for your own safety and security, but also so that you can consider the knock-on effect of these issues on your teammates and the security of the team as a whole, should you be recruited.

Conditions of service

Working hours: A nominal 35 hours per week. However, EAs need to be flexible so that they can respond to the needs of each placement and of the local community. EAs are entitled to the equivalent of one day off per working week (these are not taken each week but are accumulated and used in a block), but evening and weekend work is often required. EAs need to ensure that adequate time is taken for rest and relaxation throughout their period of service.

Expenses covered:

- Food, travel, phone calls and general living expenses while in Palestine and Israel. This is provided as a cash allowance on a monthly basis.
- Outward and return travel from UK/Ireland to Tel Aviv.

- Travel, accommodation and food for the 10 day Preparation period and for the Advocacy and Debriefing week following your three months in Palestine and Israel.

Benefits:

- Accident, travel & medical insurance.
- National Insurance contributions and equivalent for Irish EAs.
- Financial support for counselling and retreat after return home.

Equipment: All EAs receive a mobile phone for use in I&OP. All EAs will also use laptops, which we can provide.

Though we commit to covering all expenses we challenge each EA to do one fundraising event to contribute to the overall costs incurred by the programme. This can be a sponsored walk/ride/silence/fundraising dinner or something similar, to take place after training. It is not a requirement for participation.

Candidates who are successful at interview will be expected to complete a medical questionnaire, have a resilience interview and do a criminal record check.

During the two-week residential Preparation period, we work together with EAs to understand if the role is right for them and to support them to become ready to serve in Palestine and Israel. If we and they are sure that the role is right for them, we formally appoint them at the end of this two-week period.

Background to the programme

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) provides protection to vulnerable Palestinian communities through the presence of internationals, monitors human rights abuses, supports Israeli and Palestinian peace activists, and advocates for an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The programme is an initiative of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and was established in 2002 in response to a call from the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem.

The EAPPI in the UK and Ireland is managed by Quakers in Britain on behalf of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and 16 other partner churches and church-related organisations. Quakers in Britain recruits, supports and trains EAs from the UK and Ireland and the EAPPI Local Programme Coordinator in Jerusalem acts as the EAs' line manager in Palestine and Israel.

Quakers in Britain are a faith group committed to working for equality and peace. The Quaker testimonies to equality, justice, peace, simplicity and truth are a challenge to alleviate suffering and seek positive social change.

EAPPI is not involved in proselytising or missionary activity.