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Course: BCNM01 - Human Rights in the Middle East

Personal Reflective Essay – #EndOccupation Campaign

As part of the Human Rights in the Middle East module we were tasked with embarking on a campaign of our choice. The campaign must be centred around a human rights issue affecting people in the Middle East. The group I was a member of decided to focus on the current occupation of Israel in Palestine. We chose this topic primarily because one of our team mates has had first-hand knowledge and has lived in Palestine. During our first meeting as a group we all listened attentively as she gave us her account of everyday life in occupied Palestine. She spoke about frequent attacks, restricted travel due to boarder control, restricted access to health care and her journey from Palestine to Ireland.

The rest of the team listened in awe, shock and disbelief as she spoke about these experiences. It was hard for us to believe what was going on in Palestine as prior to this we only had a vague knowledge of the situation. As we continued conversing during that meeting we began to realize that not many people knew what was even going on in Palestine. We decided that our campaign objective would be to raise awareness. We decided to do this by creating and coding a website from scratch. The website will include a brief history of the current situation in Palestine and the factors that have contributed to the ongoing conflict. Through the website we want people to not just know what is going on in Palestine but we want people to become aware of the human rights that are being violated as a result of the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

One of the main goals of our campaign was to give an honest and hopefully unbiased perspective of the situation in Palestine. We want people to visit the site and get glimpse into the reality of normal people living in Palestine. The best way to do this was to get pictures and videos depicting everyday life for the people in Palestine. We got this original content from friends and relatives that our teammate contacted back home in Palestine. On the same page we included quotes from business owners, parents and other people living. These quotes explain how the current political and economic climate in Palestine has affected their business, their lives and the lives of their family members.

As part of the campaign my main responsibility was to create the website. This was a very time-consuming task as programming does take time. I felt this was where I was able to use my skills and experience to create something impactful and captivating. I wanted to make sure that the website was easy to navigate through and only gave the website visitors a well-rounded and unbiased view on what is really going on in Palestine. I wanted the website to have a basic and plain theme so that it wouldn't really take away from the information being presented on the website. I decided to go with a so computer-generated shade of blue and a white colour which blended really well together.

The website was primarily coded in HTML5, CSS and used various JavaScript libraries and packages such as Bootstrap, html5lightbox, various jQuery libraries, photo swipe and respond among others. The JavaScript libraries were used to create the automatic photos wipes and the zoom in effects. It also allowed videos to play on the site. I used JavaScript to add a animated effect to the website to make it more appealing visually. HTML5 is the programming language used to add and separate the different types of data and information being put on the website. It takes care of titles, paragraphs, sections, pictures, videos and icons among other things. The next programming language that featured heavily in the project was CSS. This language was used to basically add style and responsiveness to the HTML5 code. HTML5 can be described as basic blueprint for a website but it is languages like CSS and JavaScript that give a webpage that extra appeal.

We laid out the website under the following headers Home, The History and Real Life, Real People. We thought that this would be suitable as we (1) Wanted to let people know what our intentions were with this campaign, (2) To give people a background history of factors that have contributed to the current state of Palestine (3) And we wanted to show images of life and depict both the beauty and tragedy of life in occupied Palestine. We wanted to avoid overloading visitors with information on the site. We decided to keep the amount of text as minimal as possible and we added a wide array of photo.

Personally, the most important thing on the website was the Real Life, Real People page. This is where we featured the photo gallery and quotes from civilians. Photos can leave a greater impact on people than words, I can attest to this as a visual learner. For this reason, we wanted to make sure the photos we displayed were as authentic and as close to reality as we could get. We were very lucky that our team mate from Palestine was able to get pictures from her friends and relatives who currently live there.

The pictures do not just show the conflict, violence and death that the mainstream media bombards the public with, but we wanted to capture the joy, happiness, resilience and beauty of the people and the country. Even in the midst of such turmoil they are able to continue living life as best as they can which is very admirable. At the bottom of the page I included some quotes from regular civilians speaking on how the conflict has affected their lives and their businesses. The main aim for this page was to humanize the victims of the occupation and to remind people viewing the website that these are people at the end of the day and they do not deserve to have their human rights violated.

In conclusion, taking part in this campaign has been eye-opening as prior to it I was not very educated as to what was going in Palestine other than the random headlines I would read on Facebook or Twitter. I was lucky enough to have a very hardworking and co-operative team because without them all of this would not have been possible.